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HIGH-WAYS AND BY-WAYS;

OR,

TALES OF THE ROADSIDE,

PICKED UP IN THE FRENCH PROVINCES.

BY

A WALKING GENTLEMAN.

MAHARAJA SERFOGI

THIRD SERIES.

"I love France so well that I will not part with a village of it; I will have it all mine."
King Henry V.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE CONSCRIPT'S BRIDE.

"I was [once] the admiration of every one that beheld me. What was I now?"

GODWIN.

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THE CONSCRIPT'S BRIDE.

CHAPTER I.

It was fête day in the village of Flixecourt, in Picardy, but not exclusively there; for it was one of those national festivals, when the whole country pours forth its feelings in con-current streams of gladness. It was a week or two before the consummation of that annual union which joins spring to summer—

> A season atween June and May,

when the coyness of the vernal bride melts in tepid

showers, beneath the sighs of her glowing lover. It was, in fact, the feast of the Pentecost, with us familiarly called Whitsuntide; and it wanted two hours to noon as I stood on the rising ground northward of the village, and looked upon the valley extending at either side. The verge of the horizon all around was formed by a ridge of sloping eminences; and the hollowed circle beneath them was a pastoral vale, with Flixecourt for its cen

The great road between Aberville and Paris lay close to my left, but I descended a little, so as to lose sight of it entirely, for the rest of the scene owned no fellowship with the highways. A breeze sporting across the earth gave motion to the corn-blades and herbage which covered it. This undulating carpet was chequered with the brightest tints. Crimson patches of clover and sain-foin were contrasted with fields of yellow-flowered trefoil, with green varieties of grass and flax, and greyish shades of unripe barley, which waved over large spaces of the unenclosed

plain, and looked in the distance, like the heaving bosom of the sea. Many footpaths wound through these fenceless fields. Groups of peasant girls came tripping along them, their heads just visible above the corn, and the white lappets of their caps seeming to move over it like sea-birds skimming the waves. There was not one cloud abroad. My shadow, stretching away towards the west, was the only dark spot between the brilliant blue above and the bright scene beneath me. The odour of clover and trefoil came floating on every smell of air; and an invisible choir of larks were trilling their songs far up the sky, each independent note dying faintly down, as if echoed from the very vault of Heaven.

The contemplation of such scenes is at all times delicious, when we take in draughts of enjoyment through every sense thus acted on. But most of all, when mankind is in harmony with Nature's less dignified productions as it was on the day which I describe.

Group after group of peasants passed by me. Nothing could be gayer than the colours of the gowns, and coats, and kerchiefs which they wore; nothing more blooming than the flowers they carried, nothing more light nor graceful than their gait; but not one individual displayed that boisterous mirth, so indicative of rustic happiness, in almost every nation except France. There, in comparison with other countries, one seldom hears a joyous carol burst from a band of rural revellers, nor does the lightness of their hearts

Turn, as it leaves the lips, to song.

There is, on the contrary, a decorum in their mirth which prevents its exuberance, throws a tempering shade across their pleasures, and gives to them a tone of courtesy rather than of joy. But this must not be mistaken, as superficially it might, for insensibility. Comfort is, in truth, as common to the French peasant as is the air he breathes. His pleasures are as usual as his

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meals or his repose. His climate allows him to live in the constant exercise of rural sports and out-of-door indulgences. They are to him no rarities; and it is only things uncommon that call forth a strong excitement. Amusement is so blended with his habits and pursuits, that even while he is gayest he has time for thought. The riot of an Irish cottier's brief interval of joy might seem more genuine than his—but *that* is not enjoyment. It is the forced forgetfulness of woe—if, indeed, it can be thought to come from the mind at all; or is not rather the mere struggle of youthful blood against the wasting miseries of ill-fate.

The tolling of the church bell seemed to cause a quickened movement among the peasantry, and led my observation to the building itself, towards which every body was pressing, with an anxiety more animated than mere devotion could awaken. The period I treat of is so far back as the year 1814. I, insensibly following the general movement, struck into a

path that led towards the church, through a deep hollow at one side of the village, forming a kind of rustic suburb, composed of detached cottages, standing irregularly in plots of garden ground, and thick plantations. Several observations which caught my ear as I moved along, led me to expect some ceremony, although I could not ascertain of what kind, beyond the mere church service. The *patois* in which the people conversed was not quite intelligible to me; so I stepped on still faster than they did, and soon reached the foot of the rising ground on which the church was placed. While I looked upwards, examining the appearance of the simple edifice, its white-washed walls and spireless steeple cheerfully reflecting back the sunbeams, a pressure of the people within became evident towards the door-way, and a party soon issued from it, which was followed by a crowd that gazed with looks of much interest, mingled with respect.

The party consisted of about half a dozen

men, and as many females, all evidently of a class superior to the crowd which followed them, and easily distinguished by their air and costume, as belonging to a rank of society which in the country parts of France is so thoroughly respectable. I mean those proprietors of small estates, rendered numerous by the subdivisions of property, whose station is half-way between the gentry and the peasants; but whose manners and acquirements allow them an affinity with the former, too close to be broken by their participation in the upright independence which characterizes the latter. They are, in short, that strong link in the chain of social life in France which binds the highest with the lowest class; and while causing an imperceptible fusion of distinctions unknown in nations less refined, is itself the perfection of that *middle state* which philosophy and feeling alike pronounce to be the best.

My eyes glanced quickly on the several individuals of the group which approached me;

but they were soon fixed upon the centre object, a woman dressed in the uncouth and unbecoming habiliments of a *Sœur de la Charité.* She was not near enough to the place at which I stopped, when my attention was attracted towards her, to enable me to examine particularly the features shrouded by her projecting cap of stiffened white linen, with lappets hanging on her shoulders, and there joining the folds of a black serge dress with long tight boddice, large loose sleeves, and of a cut and pattern altogether the most ungraceful. A rudely carved crucifix, suspended to her girdle by a silver chain, was held in one hand, and the other was pressed between those of an elderly man, whose arm was linked with her's, but whether supporting or supported, I could not distinguish.

As I stood on my post of observation, the country people whom I had previously outwalked, came thronging after me; and as they perceived the principal figure in the animated scene, they one and all stopped in their career,

fixed their whole observation on *her*, and while the bell tolled loud reproaches against their indifference, they left the church to the occupation of a few pious old souls, in whom curiosity had become extinct, or religion reanimated. Anxious ejaculations and corresponding gestures told the disappointment of each of the new comers who were evidently too late. I gave an attentive ear, to catch as much as possible the sense of the expressions of disappointment, loudly uttered or half murmured, according to the age or sex of the speakers.

"Too late, after all, Annette!" cried a smart ruddy-cheeked girl to her companion.

"Aye, thanks to your vanity, that *would* make you stay to stitch that new lace round the lappets of your cap," retorted Annette, at the same time adjusting the large bouquet of ranunculuses and May roses, which was pinned to her flowered cotton shawl, and had been deranged as she came along.

"My vanity! your coquetry, you mean, my

dear. We had been here an hour ago, if you had at once given your sprigs of myrtle to Antoine, the gardener, in lieu of that *beautiful* bouquet," and a longing glance at the blooming bunch accompanied the words.

"I am sure I don't care a bachelor's button for Antoine or his bouquet," cried Annette, blushing deeply.

"Then do, my dear Celestine, give it to me," said Annette, her little sparkling eyes shooting forth rays of eagerness and avidity. But seeing that I could glean nothing from that couple of coquettes, I turned round to the exclamation of a middle aged man behind me—

"Poor Mademoiselle Valerie! she has then indeed taken the vows!"

"Alas! it's a sore sight to look on," replied the good woman who leant on his arm, with that easy indifference which distinguishes old married folks on a holiday,—"a sore sight, to see one so pretty and so nicely shaped, ruined by that hideous dress."

"The *dress* is the least part of the evil, Marie," said the husband, with a look that seemed meant to smother the last flickerings of his helpmate's conceit.

"Good God! what a weary pilgrimage for one so young—what a sacrifice for duty—what dangers she is about to encounter!" was softly murmured by an old and thoughtful looking man close by, in a pensive coloured brown coat, and a problematical three cornered hat; and I was inclined to give all my attention to the under current of information which ran through his soliloquizing, when a smart-looking young fellow, in nankeen trowsers, and a pink handkerchief, rushed up briskly and asked me, "Pray, Sir, is the ceremony really over? Do tell me how did she behave? Did she shew no regret? Did she weep? How did she look? pale, or flushed?"

I answered rather abruptly, that I had not been in the church; but my questioner only exclaimed, evidently thinking but of himself, "My God, what a pity to have missed it!"

then, turning sharply to me again, "Did she say any thing? Nothing? Did not she say when she would set out?"

I found this intolerable; and, wheeling away, I took a path which led me nearer to the line of the approaching party. I felt all my own inquisitive propensities fermenting. I had heard enough to make them boil over.—"Young—pretty—well shaped—a vow—a sacrifice—a pilgrimage."—What better elements than these, what more is wanting, thought I, to form such a combination as I delight in!

"And so thinking," will some of my readers perhaps cry out, "why not at once have satisfied your own curiosity and ours, by drawing freely on the loquacity of those who gave you these interesting hints, and thus have escaped the necessity of tantalizing yourself and *us*?"

But every one has his own way of coming to a conclusion—and I hate *jumping* at it. And besides, I have frequently known over-ardour for knowledge cause a troublesome re-action;

as when a fast going tattler runs restive at a *question*, like a cross-grained horse that will stop from a full trot at the very touch of a spur. So, willing to let my subject develope itself in its own way, I leaned patiently against a tree; and having marked the group as *mine*, I leisurely watched its approach.

It was soon close to me; and I set myself quickly to work at my task of examination, as each new figure burst upon me. I first scrutinized my *heroine*, for I had without hesitation fixed the title on her. I next perused the open countenance of her arm-in-arm companion. That, said I, is her father; and that nice old lady in the satin cloak, black velvet bonnet, and plain taffeta gown, that is her mother; and those two simply yet elegantly dressed young women, with intelligent yet sorrowful eyes, they must be her sisters; and the two young men, they are her brothers; and so I went on, classifying all the individuals in their different degrees of relationship—and I was in every instance wrong. But

I might have remained so to the present day, satisfied that I had made out a very interesting family party, of persons who, with one exception were *only* connected by pure friendship, and not by the muddy cement of blood, had I not luckily espied among the very persons on whom my fancy was playing these pranks, a gentleman whom I had met a week before, at a *table d'hôte*, in a neighbouring town, where I had spent some idle days, killing time—the only fair game for a sportsman then in season.

That is her uncle, thought I, and through his means I shall know all; and just as he passed me I threw him a nod of recognition, and immediately took off my hat, not merely to him but to the whole party which was at the instant passing by. My salutation and many another from those near me, were courteously returned, in the lump as it were, by all save the *Sœur de la Charité*, who walked briskly on, with a fixed look, and a bright expression in her young and lovely face, as if she wandered not even in

thought either to the right or left, but had a straightway purpose in her brain, that was not to be turned aside. She was very lovely, and about twenty years of age, of fair complexion, slight of form, with eyes of mingled blue and grey, whose dark lashes formed a fitting fringe to their fine-woven expression of tenderness and depth. Her hair was totally put out of sight, under her cap, but her broad forehead and arched brows gave evidence of mental charms which lacked no garniture; and she moved onwards, with an intent, but still not vacant gaze, that seemed to clear the path on which her mind was journeying.

While she and her friends passed on, all the varieties of expression common of French rustics were freely lavished. Admiration for her "beauty," blessings on her "pilgrimage," and prayers for her safety, were expressed in every tone of emphasis and cadence, from the loudest utterance to the lowest murmur, intermixed with those tongue-and-teeth interjections which do not

amount to articulation, but speak still more feelingly.

My *table d'hôte* acquaintance dropped behind, and bustling towards me, he asked me if I had been in the church? When I replied in the negative, he exclaimed, "More the pity, for you lost a sight of uncommon interest."

"Why, it was only a young woman taking the vows of a *Sœur de la Charité?* said I, with affected indifference.

"True! but *such* a woman, and for such a purpose!"

"It's nothing very uncommon," continued I, in the same tone, "it is merely to attend the sick poor, is it not?"

"Ah!" said he, "I see you know nothing about the matter. You must come along with me, my friend, and see this wonderful young creature, parting from her friends and setting out on her unparalleled mission."

I cannot help avowing that these words gave a check to my feelings; for I feared that my

heroine would, after all, turn out to be a wayward fanatic, inflamed by the forced revival of exploded zeal, and rushing into life on some wild schemes misnamed devotion, but in truth *delirium*. But a moment's reflection drove this doubt from my mind. My thoughts flew back to the beaming, warm expression of her face, and I felt that *it* could not have sprung from aught that was distorted or impure.

"Come along, my friend," cried my companion. "We must not linger; and as we go on, I will explain somewhat of the mystery which hangs over this affair, and make you acquainted with all that I, for I am but an acquaintance myself, know of it."

I accordingly joined him in the straggling and imperfect procession, in which the absence of all form, and the presence of much feeling, supplied in interest what it wanted in effect. My good-natured and garrulous friend ran on roundly in his task of information. He told me as much as could be told in the same space of

time, of the situation, and circumstance of the "*Sœur de la Charité*;" and he at once put to flight the reptile misgivings which had been settling on the wholesome fancies of my brain.

But in the brief time given to us, he could do little more than whet the edge of my curiosity. It required long days of social intercourse and careful cultivation of the opening confidence of more than one informant, to enable me to come at all I wished to know of my heroine's story. That *all* I now proceed to lay before my readers, and I hope they will not think the worse of my method or my motives, in cutting short all that relates to my own share in what followed. The nature of my stories forces egotism upon me, and the nature of man is a great bar against its good management. In the wish for correctness, I may say too much of self; in the dread of trespassing, I might say too little: but the latter evil is the least, and I shall now, at all events, choose *it*. And I will carry my caution a step farther, omitting all mention beyond this of that

better half of myself and my adventures, poor Ranger, whose sins of heretofore intrusion, if they have met no pardon, must be visited on his master's head—not his.

CHAPTER II.

In the broad valley extending to the eastward of Flixecourt, and on the sides of the irregular hills which bound it, stand several houses belonging to those small proprietors, or gentlemen farmers, whose condition I have before slightly sketched. One of these residences, with about one hundred acres of land, had fallen into the possession of one Monsieur Lacourtelle upon the death of his father, by whom the property had been acquired during the turmoil of the Revolution, in what manner is not important to me or my story.

Mr. Lacourtelle, in following the pursuits of husbandry and the chace, which constitute almost

the only employments of persons of his station, had but little leisure for the cultivation of refinements; and an indifference to every thing beyond the necessaries of life, moral and physical, was the natural consequence. He was a hardy independent man, with a rough hand, ready to open for a friend, or close upon a foe; and a heart, which though it might lie fallow for a season, was sure to yield a full crop of feeling when moistened by charity, and warmed by affection; but he was not one of those men whose habitual course of thought and action stamps on them the broad signet of benevolence, and marks them out to their fellows as objects of involuntary love and veneration. There was a harsh uncompromising manner about Mr. Lacourtelle, inherited from the revolutionary roughness of his father; and he was likely to hand down as much of it to Lucien, his only remaining son, as was capable of resisting two very powerful passions, which distinguished the youth, and which act more than any others,

perhaps, to soften both mind and manners. These were love and vanity. I place them in their proper order of precedence here, rather from an estimate of their moral value, than to mark their station in the mind of Lucien; for with him the latter was most powerful, perhaps from having firmly enshrined itself within him ere the influence of the other came in contact with, and shook its pre-eminence.

The number of Mr. Lacourtelle's sons had dwindled by various casualties from six, an usually large quantity for a French family, to the one just mentioned. He never had a daughter; but Valerie, his sister's child, had always, from her birth, supplied the place of one, and held in Mr. Lacourtelle's affections a station as high as was occupied by his own offspring. Having married when young, he was left a widower as early as most men become husbands; and not having been peculiarly happy in the wedded state, he had no inclination to purchase a second ticket in the same

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lottery. His affections became consequently fixed on his son and niece, but not with that intensity which generally results from the loss of one dear object, in reference to those left behind. There was a sort of selfishness mixed with the good nature of Mr. Lacourtelle, which made the latter feeling need a stronger effort to development, than is necessary with those of more spontaneous kindness. He thought more of his farm and his field sports, than of his son or his niece; and while the former were cultivated with care and perseverance, the latter were left to nature and chance, two dangerous guides for youth and beauty. The consequence was obvious. The innate *feelings* (whose existence no philosopher will dispute), took the course which the sex and circumstances of each prepared. The boy ran wild and restive—the girl grew sensitive and shy. *He* sent his thoughts and feelings all abroad on the far sea of life, while *hers* became concentrated and domestic, retiring from such wide development, within

that haven of seclusion, where the heart of woman buds and blossoms, like the flower that sends its odour from the shade.

Although differing thus widely in many points of character and temper, there were some feelings which seemed common to both—warmth of heart, generosity, humanity, and above all things a strong reciprocal affection. Never were two children more fondly attached to each other; and had there been any one, sufficiently interested or observant, habitually with them, it would no doubt, have been surely and easily foretold what their childish fondness would in time ripen into. As it was, left wholly to themselves, they had only to love each other with all the warmth of infantine regard; and the one woman servant, and the man who performed the indoor offices of the family, forming together Mr. Lacourtelle's scanty household, were alone the coarse but pleased observers of the children's attachment. Mr. Lacourtelle attended to the cares of his farm, and enjoyed the

relaxations of the chase, while the youthful companions followed the course of scanty education, gleaned at the village school, and revelled in the unrestrained enjoyments afforded by the rural retreat in which they lived.

The growth of a childish attachment is a trite subject, often treated of, and presenting in almost every case the same symptoms. The amalgamation of tempers and dispositions, imperceptibly taking place between two characters originally distinct, and even opposed, is a process as natural, as the junction of sap and fibre between branches of different trees engrafted together; and though in infancy they may look the very same, still in the ripening season the foliage and the fruits betray the discrepancy, and excite wonder at the mysterious union between objects so radically unlike: and so it was with Valerie and Lucien. Little variety was noticed from the cradle upwards, till at the mysterious age of fifteen, or somewhat earlier, the rapid revolution of nature began and ended

ere the observers had thought of remarking that common development, which realizes the fiction of an instant growth from infancy to manhood. Lucien did really seem, at this season of change, to have passed at once, over all the usual gradations, which mark the feelings and manners of boys in general. I know not whether to call this prematurity or vigour of mind. The first carries with it the germs of decay in the very effort at distinction, and such could not certainly be discovered in Lucien's bodily or mental traits. He was tall, well formed, and strikingly handsome; and an early consciousness of his personal advantages gave to his whole air that forward bearing, which often passes for, if it be not superiority of mind. This certainty of possessing in his very looks a passport to admiration, added new force to the energies of his ardent temperament, and in pushing him even before the station which that alone would have induced him to take among his fellows, forced him to act a still more prominent part than that

required. Consciousness of intellect, unallied with those external advantages, which philosophy vainly labours to depreciate, may, and does on many occasions, produce the same effect; but genius itself often shrinks before the comely bully, who looks down on its possessor from an elevation of half a foot.

Allied with this self-satisfied feeling, thus acting upon Lucien, was an overweening vanity, its natural, but not inevitable associate, for a man may know his advantages, without forgetting himself. But in this instance memory was treacherous in proportion as consciousness was acute; and Lucien. in short, believed that in person and mind, and in all the exercises to which both were subject in his narrow sphere of action, he could not have a rival: this was because he *had* not one. He was by far the most active, expert, and ready of his school companions, while he remained at school; and when he gave up his attendance there, to assist his father in the superintendence of his estate,

he became quickly remarkable for his proficiency in all the field sports which the neighbourhood allowed. Thus, to his sufficient knowledge of his own language, and the capabilities of reading and writing it well, he added an ample proficiency in dancing, fencing, shooting, in riding at the ring, in playing quoits and nine-pins; and in every *fête*, or fair, or *ducasse*, for leagues around, Lucien was sure to be the most admired of all the lads that entered the lists of rustic sports.

The striking specimen which Lucien afforded of the genus of national character to which his belonged, would have been incomplete had it not displayed the martial propensities which, at the period of his boyhood, so strongly distinguished his countrymen. It was then the meridian of the empire's greatness. Wagram, and Austerlitz, and Jena, had sent forth from the cannon's mouth the proclamations of its glory. The remotest villages of France vibrated to the sounds, and Lucien was not the last of

her gallant youths whose heart bounded at each new blast from Victory's trumpet. At that period every young man in France seemed born a soldier. The feeling that they were destined to arms, was common to all. Their fathers, and all those of the generation to whom they were succeeding, either were serving in the armies or had served. The whole population was imbued with military ardour, and to be insensible to it was not to be a Frenchman. The consequence was, as all travellers in France must have observed, a half chivalrous, half barbarous impetuosity of manners, in which urbanity seemed to be thought inconsistent with valour. The feeling of property, of possessing a stake in the great game then playing, of having a land to fight for, not in name but in fact, was another powerful stimulus to the pride which filled the heart of the French soldier; and the conscription, that dreadful drain upon the population, was almost looked on as a necessary support to national honour, and the only worthy

path to individual distinction. Such was, at any rate, the aspect in which it appeared to such bold spirits as Lucien Lacourtelle, and the majority of the youths who had not yet shared the horrors to which it led its victims. But the vanity of Lucien was perhaps more powerful than any other feeling in filling him with a passionate desire for a military career. He gave his fancy full scope to revel in the anticipated triumphs of fine clothes, lace, embroidery, and feathers. He marked the growing symmetry of his own form, gazed at the fine features which his looking-glass revealed, calculated the coming harvest of beard and mustachios, and never did a prisoner long more ardently for the bursting of his dungeon-door, than did Lucien for the day which, completing his eighteenth year, would make him competent to the slavery of being drawn for a soldier.

When the longed-for day arrived, and the swaggering importance of Lucien seemed at its height, he found out, as is usually the case

with human wishes, that in the attainment of one, he had only acquired a resting-place for the growth of more. Those "Alps on Alps" which rise upon the mind's eye, had only begun their illusory freaks in that of the ardent boy. He was now *liable* to serve, but till called out for service he might as well have remained a child for ever.

The day of drawing lots under the conscription laws was not long in coming round. These calls for blood were now each year more frequent. Victory on victory was purchased by whole hecatombs of men. The years which had passed had, long ere they begun, furnished their quotas of recruits, and ere these had time to run their brief career, and perish for the conqueror's glory, new drafts were made for the years to come; and this system went on with such frightful rapidity, that the school room and the cradle were threatened with anticipated mortgages to supply the fierce expenditure of war. Had the curse of conquest lain much longer upon France,

even unborn babes would have been the right of despotism, and mothers would have prayed for the reversal of nature's laws, and loathed the hour in which they brought forth a male child, unless deformity or disease gave hope of its escape from the general doom.

THE TANJORE MAHARAJAH SERFOJI'S SARASWATI MAHAL

CHAPTER III.

The village of Flixecourt presented a striking picture of mixed animation and unhappiness on the wished for morning, when Lucien presented himself with the other young men of the commune, to tempt the chances of the fate he longed for. At an early hour the street was thronged with the inconsiderate youths, their anxious parents and relatives, and an assemblage of indifferent spectators, consisting of those veterans who had already gone through the test, and of individuals who from various causes were exempted from the risk. A large proportion of females, actuated by varied emotions of solicitude, made up the crowd that thronged round

the office of the mayor, and pressed for entrance into this place of doom. The village functionaries occupied their elbow-chairs, the cherry-tree backs and rush-bottoms of which supported a mass of rustic dignity amply proportionate to that which filled the costly state chairs of the capital itself. The business of the day was entered on with as much solemnity as though the imperial council chamber had been the scene of trial; and the sentence of fate from the petty magistrate was looked for with as much respect as though the lips of the emperor were about to utter the decree.

Silence being proclaimed, the names of those liable to serve were loudly called in alphabetical order, and one by one they stepped up to the magisterial table, put forward their hands, drew forth from the vase containing the numbers that one which decided for the time their hopes and fears, and filed off immediately to the right or left, pursuant to the chance which pronounced them conscripts or freemen.

Varied and interesting were the exhibitions of feeling which took place. Some of these young men, hurried away by the factitious impulse of military ambition, danced and leaped with joy at the announcement of the luck which made them soldiers. Others, struck with anguish at the sentence that tore them from their happy homes, could scarcely muster pride or courage sufficient to preserve them from some unmanly show of grief. Again, there were seen, among those who had escaped the lot, either the violent expression of real or feigned regret, or the unbounded display of natural delight. One youth rushed into the open arms of his rejoicing mother—another embraced his anxious and trembling sweetheart—a third vowed a pilgrimage of grateful thanks to the patron Saint who had preserved him to his parents. Nor were these outward indications of joy or grief confined to the young men alone. Loud bursts of hysteric laughter, or piercing lamentations from relatives and friends, followed the declaration which

pronounced the fate of each new name; and as Lucien Lacourtelle strode forward, with panting anxiety, to answer the call upon him, he was stopped by the falling body of a poor woman, who sunk down in strong convulsions, as the preceding name, that of her favourite son, was followed by the announcement of a number within those limited for service, and which consequently forced him away.

But Lucien felt for the moment indifferent to all but his own sensations. Burning with impetuous ambition, he thought only of the long career of opening glory which he saw before him. Danger was not for a moment presented to his view. His heart beat high with hope, and he felt his face flushed as he presented himself at the table. He rapidly passed his fingers through his curling locks, and looking round in conscious satisfaction at the admiration which his beauty excited, he stood erect, with an expression of countenance, half smiles, half frowns, and he put his hand boldly into the vase. The

chances that he would have drawn a number above that required for service were considerably enhanced from the circumstance of the lad who preceded him having been below it. It was not likely that two successive lots would have met the same luck. The by-standers, therefore, uttered many an exclamation, meant to encourage Lucien, giving assurances that he had nothing to fear. But he, with the common feeling that leads mankind to believe in what they wish for, had a strong presentiment that he should draw one of the numbers he desired; and he listened with impatient expectation to the slow and cautious tones of the wary Greffier, whose duty it was to examine the numbers and announce them as they were drawn and handed to the mayor, and finally passed into his hands. The number was proclaimed. It was below the mark—and Lucien was consequently a conscript. An expression of astonished regret broke from some individual in the crowd, and was echoed loudly through it.

"*Vive l'Empereur!*" cried Lucien, striking the table with his open hand, then waving his hat above his head, and stamping on the floor with an air that seemed to command an according shout. His bold demeanour and manly tone produced the effect he desired, and a general repetition of his enthusiastic exclamation shook the unaccustomed and white-washed walls of the mayor's cottage chamber.

Lucien filed off to the little inner-room, where sat the council of revision, consisting of the agents for the conscription and the surgeon appointed to examine the young soldiers, and see that no physical impediment debarred them of the privilege of becoming "food for powder," or a mark for bullets. Lucien was pronounced perfect. The surgeon declared him a model of symmetry; the agents registered his name in their muster roll; and the serjeant who was to take charge of the new levy, embraced him with a brotherly delight, and made him by anticipation a field marshal of France. He then tied a

bunch of tri-coloured ribbons round his hat; and Lucien, thus distinguished, sallied out into the street, where a number of curious and interested rustics waited anxiously for the appearance of each new-drawn recruit.

A murmur of regret, mixed with admiration of Lucien's bold demeanour and handsome appearance, was heard in the crowd as he pushed through with a haughty air; and he passed on, regardless of their kind expressions, but not insensible to the admiration he excited, and which never failed to command his attention. He walked quickly onwards, without turning to the right or left—soon cleared the long street of which the village is composed, and after mounting, for a little, the rising ground to the north, beyond the extremity of the street, he struck off to the eastward, by the little path which still leads through the pastures and meadows in the direction of his home.

Elated in spirits, absorbed, not in thought but in forgetfulness, a sensation of chaotic con-

fusion alone occupied his brain. His movements sympathized with this light unheeding frame of mind, and he stepped forwards briskly, following his path over hill and valley, with instinctive rather than reasoning correctness. Wholly wrapped up in this intense, but not unfeeling selfishness, he did not give a thought to others, nor calculate for an instant on the effect which the news he had to tell was likely to produce on his father and Valerie. He was insensible to the abruptness of his coming appearance before them, with the badge of his fate flaunting and streaming from his hat, and the intelligence of their misfortune in thus losing him evidenced in the exultation of his look and manner. This might, in a modest mind, have arisen from a want of confidence in its own importance, not believing the happiness of others to be dependant in its fate, and consequently overlooking the effect it was likely to produce; but such was not the cause of Lucien's inconsiderate bearing. He knew full well his own value, and

made no under-estimate of his importance in the feelings of his father and his cousin; and his temporary forgetfulness of them was solely an effect of the selfish vanity which, till that hour, was the leading impulse of his character. But as he rapidly approached the house, and suddenly raising his eyes, caught its full view before him, the recollection of its occupants, of himself, and of the relative positions in which they all stood, flashed across his mind. He snatched his hat from his head, tore the ribbons from around it, and thrust them into the breast of his coat, passed his hand for a moment over his flushed and throbbing brow, and endeavouring to compose himself to a more calm demeanour, he walked towards the house with a firm but measured step.

But he was not unobserved. From a window, looking down upon the lawn he had just entered, and the hazel copse he had emerged from, a pair of anxious eyes had watched and closely marked those actions of his too dilatory sense of delicate

consideration. Valerie had been long waiting his approach, long even before he could have been reasonably expected to return. But when affection is on the watch, reason is an unheeded time-teller. Before it was possible that the business of the conscription could have been well begun at Flixecourt, Valerie had taken her station in the room which commanded the path leading from it, in that state of restless hope inseparable from expectancy, and her bright eyes sent their glances far across the fields, as if their attraction had power to draw along the viewless object of their search. From the same universal weakness of our nature, the belief in what we desire, which had filled Lucien with a presentiment that he should be drawn for the conscription, Valerie had all along indulged the expectation—almost the conviction—that he would not. The actual dread of such a calamity had never once crossed her mind, but she could not shake off a feeling of nervous and gnawing insecurity, which is almost as agitating

as apprehension, and to some minds worse than certainty. She did not suffer under the fear of ill, but she wanted to be assured of good; and in this state, more passive but more trying than the very knowledge of the worst, her anxious heart told, in redoubled palpitations, a false account of time.

At length she saw him coming. She marked the agile bound with which he sprang across the stile that divided the coppice from the lawn; and she read in his quick and forward air, security to her hopes, to her happiness, and to him. A faint scream of joy burst from her, and she rose from her seat to fly towards him. But she caught his sudden pause, as the house seemed to fix his attention. She marked the hurried and agitated movement with which he tore the ribbon from his hat and placed it in his bosom—and the agonizing quickness of affection too plainly seized upon the rest. The whole story of his fate and her's seemed told, and the broad volume of affliction was self-opened to

the deep-searching glance of instantaneous grief. Valerie tottered to a chair. A sickness of heart succeeded to its momentary expansion. She felt the blood rush from her freezing cheeks. Her eyes swam. But she had a fine and vigorous mind—and even in this stage of acute and sudden suffering, she rose up against the weakness which she could not avert. To meet Lucien was the immediate impulse of her recollection: in joy or in woe, her first movement was towards him. She therefore slowly and with faltering steps quitted the room; but when she reached the stairs, she was forced to pause, and lean against the banisters, for support from the faintness which returned upon her more overpoweringly than at first. She heard Lucien's step as he approached the house—she saw him open the door and enter—she marked him coming towards her—she felt herself folded in his arms—but she seemed rivetted to the spot where she stood; her tongue cleaved to her mouth, her sight began to fail,

she heard not even the accents of *his* voice—and, for the first time in her life, Valerie fainted away.

The rustic habitation of Mr. Lacourtelle was not accustomed to this so common occurrence in the elegant mansions of fashion. The enervations of refinement had not reached the nerves of its occupants; but, as has been seen, feeling did not hold a less mighty sway within their hearts. Lucien, confounded and shocked by the spectacle of Valerie's pale and insensible form, lost for a while all thought of self, and with hurried movement he bore her down stairs, and into the little parlour, which was the common sitting-room of the family. He threw open the window, and applied cold water to her forehead, and forced some into her lips. A less confident mind would, in such a moment, have prompted an immediate call for help; but that of Lucien contained none of the elements of weakness, which in times of difficulty or peril seems to lean for support on others. He never thought of assistance but such as he could himself af-

ford; and as Valerie's eyes opened wildly upon him, he endeavoured to bring her back to consciousness by sounds of the most soothing endearment.

Called thus into life, the lovely girl soon revived, and a sense of her situation and of his came rapidly upon her. As she recollected all, a shuddering crept across her frame, and she felt sinking again; but she was saved from this relapse by a copious flood of tears—that dew of the heart, which waters the parched feelings and saves the mind from withering.

"Dear Valerie," said Lucien, "what is the cause of this? are you ill indeed, or is this but emotion at my return?"

"Your *return*—your return, Lucien? Oh! do not think to deceive me—I know you are going from us for ever!"

"My dearest girl, what can have put such a notion into your head? For ever! what a frightful word. Come, come, you have me with you still—you see I am come back."

THE TANJORE

"Do not think to deceive me, Lucien. You are come back, but to leave us—and to part with you at all, seems for ever."

"But why suspect all this, my Valerie—I have not told you this ill news?"

"Yes, yes, you have—this has betrayed you—I saw you hide it here!"

With these words she drew the bunch of ribbons from his bosom, pressed it between her hands, laid her head upon the table, and, sobbing convulsively, she bathed the gaudy emblem with her tears.

Lucien was utterly astonished. He had a strong affection for his cousin, his play-mate, his earliest and almost his only friend. He was conscious of her affection for him—but he had never till that moment suspected that she *loved* him, and never knew till then what it was to love. He had not thought of analyzing the feelings which Valerie had excited. He had been happy when with her, but not wretched while away. His attachment seemed that of

relationship and habit, but its heretofore security left him ignorant of what it really was. He had till then, held *himself* a more prominent place in his own consideration; but the speaking events of this awakening scene told him irresistibly that the supremacy of self was at an end.

Perhaps the most intoxicating feeling of the mind is the first conviction of being truly loved. To one of Lucien's temperament it was almost insupportably delicious. All thought of suffering or sorrow vanished before it. An exulting consciousness filled his breast. He knew and felt at the same instant that all the calm and brotherly feelings he had believed in, were no longer his. A magic touch had changed the dull compounds into passion's brightest ore, and the heart's alchymy had gained its utmost triumph. He pressed Valerie's hand in his. He held her to his bosom, and felt her's throb like it. A whirlwind of new sensations rushed through his breast and brain. The chill pure

covering of friendship dissolved from his heart, which revealed, like a northern landscape at the melting of its snowy veil, the bursting germs and blossoming delights that had been working their silent unsuspected growth beneath.

Lucien's first sensation was one of unbounded happiness. He felt a proud glow of importance on his cheek and brow. He gazed on his companion, kissed off her tears as if no bitterness was in them, held her in his arms with a triumphant pressure, and devoured with eager eyes and new born feelings the ripening form and eloquent features of the lovely girl.

Valerie had just attained the earliest stage of womanhood. She was about a year younger than Lucien, and, like him, perhaps more advanced in person and in feelings than the generality of young persons of the same age. Without knowing why, she had latterly begun to feel a reserve, an awkwardness, a something she could not define, in Lucien's presence, and a sensation still more

puzzling while he was away. Naturally reserved, she seemed to shrink still farther within herself—the only retirement left as a deeper shelter from her habitual seclusion. This timidity had been rapidly growing upon her; and now, pressed in her cousin's arms for the thousandth thousandth time, she trembled with an unknown sense of fear and shame; and in proportion as his look grew warmer, and his words more glowing, the undeveloped sense of female modesty overpowered her with its mystic and embarrassing force.

They marked each other in mute and reciprocal surprise. She could not comprehend his air of happiness, at the moment of parting, perhaps for ever. He was astonished at her coldness, while he seemed to have been transported to a world of unimagined bliss. There were no words for them; but by degrees they interchanged ideas through a medium less deceptive, for looks and sighs spoke a language that rarely lends itself to guile.

After an interval, whose duration they could not themselves have told, Lucien appeared by degrees to have recovered the mastery over speech. He made many faint and ineffectual efforts to express his sentiments, but he could for many minutes give utterance but to monosyllables, or short and common-place phrases. At length he succeeded in saying, with many a pause between the words, and with impassioned looks and gestures filling up each chasm,

"Can it—can it be possible, Valerie? Do you feel all this for me? All this deep sorrow at losing *me*?"

"Indeed, indeed, I do, Lucien, more a hundred times than I can or would express. My heart is almost breaking at the thought of your leaving me—*us*, I would say. What will your father——"

"Dearest, dearest Valerie, let us not think of him—*yet*. I am so delighted to find that you love me, so surprised at the way in which *I* love *you*, that I can think of nobody nor nothing

but you. And you do love me as much as this, quite as much as this?"

"As much as is possible—as much as I could, or *ought*, dear Lucien," murmured the blushing girl, confused and abashed at the growing warmth, and increasing pressure of her cousin.

"As you *ought!* and how much is that, Valerie? Ought there to be any bounds to your affection? Should you not love me as much as ever you can—more than ever you did—more than any one ever loved another, except as I love *you?* You should and will love me this way, Valerie—tell me that you do."

"I cannot say all I feel, Lucien—I hope I do not love you too much."

"Too much, too much! No, no," answered he, kissing her almost to suffocation, "that is impossible. We must love each other, even more than this, my own Valerie. There must be no bounds to what we feel, and think, and

say to one another. I feel as I never felt before——"

"So do I, I am sure," said Valerie. "I hope in Heaven, I feel rightly and correctly."

"Good God! what do you mean, Valerie? What are you afraid of—why do you shrink from me?"

"I don't exactly know, Lucien—but I believe I *am* afraid, of you—or of myself perhaps—I do not know what is the matter with me. My brain is reeling round," and here she laid her head upon his shoulder, and sobbed, and wept, in a burst of mingled sorrow, and shame, and fear.

This deep display of emotion brought Lucien to himself. A new feeling rose upon him, an awakened sense of propriety and respect towards her, which he irresistibly obeyed without stopping to define. He imprinted one calm kiss upon her forehead—and gently disengaging her from his embrace, he placed her again upon

her chair; then sat down upon another beside her, and with trembling hands he held one of hers firmly, but not ungently clasped, while he poured forth in unstudied phrase the feelings that rushed warm and rapidly from his heart.

CHAPTER IV.

DURING the early part of the important day just described, and while the pair most interested in its results were occupied as has been seen, Mr. Lacourtelle was following his usual avocations on his farm—but not in his usual careless and common-place frame of mind. He was not so indifferent to the fate of his son, involving as it did his own interest, as not to know that, on that day he ran the risk of being torn from his home, and deprived, at once, of his liberty and of the power of rendering his meed of assistance to the management of the little property that in the course of nature ought one day to be his.

Mr. Lacourtelle had never been drawn for

the conscription. His early marriage had saved him from the liability, and by continual good luck he had previously escaped the fatal lot. Emboldened by his own escapes he had calculated with almost certainty, that Lucien would not be unfortunate enough to draw a number against which the chances were three to one. Under this impression, he saw his son sally out in the morning to the place of trial, and he himself went forth without uneasiness on the subject. For a couple of hours, he quietly continued his superintendence of what was going forward, and gave his orders as unconcernedly as though the culture of his fields had no contrast in the blood-stained scenes of many a ravaged waste, to act in some of which his only child might be at that moment doomed. The tolling of a bell, that speaking token of the flight of time, is perhaps the thing of all others the most frequently effective in rousing the thoughtless or the reflective to a sense of the things that are. In the present case it was the

deep tone from the belfry of Flixecourt that awoke Mr. Lacourtelle to a recollection of what affected him so nearly.

"One o'clock!" cried he, in surprise, as the single note came vibrating upon the air. "Is it possible!" and he examined his watch, for a confirmation of his doubts or the accuracy of the warning just given. "So late! why the drawing must be over by this time—it was to have begun at twelve precisely. I must go to meet him—he will be anxious to come up to the house, and set our minds at rest. Not that I have been uneasy—no, no. Poh! there can be no fear of him. Thirteen to be drawn for the Commune out of fifty-two—that is more than three to one in favour of his escape. No, no, there is nothing to fear—yet—perhaps—it might chance—but—let's see, let's see!"

About half of these expressions were addressed to the men around him, the other half to himself, as he quitted the field and walked, in constantly-growing speed, towards the house.

Little by little his confidence diminished, and his anxiety increased; and when he reached the garden gate, which led towards the rear of the house, he stopped for a moment, to wipe his brow, and remove the collateral evidence of his uneasiness, too plainly stamped upon his looks. He entered the house by the kitchen, where the woman servant was preparing her soup and *ragôut* for dinner, unconscious of the scene of mixed distress and delight that had been for some time passing in the parlour. Had she known it, her culinary duties would not have been so leisurely performed, for she, like the generality of servants in France, had a deep interest in the affairs of the family she lived with, nor did her employers feel themselves degraded by her presuming to consider herself entitled to love as well as to serve them. She was not aware of Lucien's return from Flixecourt; and Mr. Lacourtelle opened the door, and walked into the room where he and Valerie sat, unconscious of the kind of *tête-à-tête* he

interrupted, and unexpected by the couple of whom it was composed.

His abrupt appearance was as startling to them, as was their unlooked-for presence to him. A moment of confusion, almost equal to what guilt itself might have caused, suffused the cheeks of Valerie with crimson, and the source of her tears seemed at once dried up. Lucien felt a mixture of emotions, in which criminality certainly had no part, but the very feeling of concealment is to an ingenuous and unpractised mind, even on a point in itself innocent, sufficient to give an appearance of crime. Lucien therefore looked as if his newly found secret was at once discovered, and as though its betrayal had covered him with infamy. But, fortunately, the previous anxiety of his father did not give him time for acute remark, nor allow him to place any bad construction on the embarrassment, which might have justified the worst. Mr. Lacourtelle saw only the confirmation of the doubts as to Lucien's safety, which had ir

his own despite, been creeping upon him. He suspected nothing more, and only gave a new proof of the egotism with which the mind passes, by external sources of reasoning, to account from those within it, for facts that are out of its controul. His sudden certitude of what he had so lately believed so improbable, filled him with an unwonted agitation, and all the warm and affectionate feelings of his nature, arose in unusual display.

"Good God!" cried he, stopping suddenly, and looking at Lucien, "I suspected this. Something told me it was so—what a misfortune for us all!"

There was very much of sorrow and nothing of anger in this speech; but Lucien and Valerie both saw only a wrathful reproach on the countenance, that in reality expressed deep grief. They thought for the instant of but one thing to be suspected. The instinct of new born love told them that secrecy was its chief charm, and

its sensitiveness whispered that discovery involved destruction.

Lucien in his confusion attempted to stammer some words, he knew not what—but a quick return to his presence of mind, convinced him that silence was the safest course for a while. He did not therefore interrupt his father as he went on; and a full weight seemed taken from his heart, and that of Valerie, as they discovered the real bearing of Mr. Lacourtelle's regret.

"Do not attempt to deny the fact, my boy, nor think I am not able to support the shock, bad as it is. But what ill luck! To be drawn the very first time! My poor child, and must you be torn from us! What can I, what can Valerie do in our loneliness? It is indeed a great affliction—great ill luck. Kiss me, Lucien, kiss me, Valerie—I never dreamt of this. I was too secure in the happiness of having you both. I did not know how happy I was—I wanted this stroke of fate to shew me what I

enjoyed, only by making me lose it. So, Lucien, you are drawn—a conscript—a soldier? Aye, Valerie, you may well weep over those cursed ribbons, that were not wanting to tell me the truth. I knew it, even when I was persuading myself it could not be."

"It is true, my dear father," said Lucien, drawn back by his father's grief to a sense of his own situation, and with his wonted facility, forgetting a while the suffering it involved, "It is true I am a soldier, and entering on a career of honour and glory for us all."

"Honour and glory, my brave boy! But what is to become of me and Valerie?" and here, overpowered by the suddenness and force of parental suffering, he could not suppress the tears, which had long lain frozen in his commonly unsusceptible bosom. This extraordinary display of sensibility deeply affected Lucien, who took one of his father's hands in his and affectionately kissed it, while Valerie, sympathizing but too painfully in her uncle's

sorrow, threw her arms round his neck, and completed a group of genuine distress—one of thousands at the same time displayed, in the country scourged by military glory.

The rest of the day passed over in sadness, but not unmixed with bright gleams of hope and sunbright visions of happiness to come. Mr. Lacourtelle, after some short time, left the children, as he called them, or the lovers, as *we* must designate them, to themselves. And thus left, they soon abandoned themselves to the flood of new sensations which irresistibly hurried them away. Valerie's reserve dissolved before the ardour of Lucien. She listened to the glowing language in which he gave utterance to his passion, and, by degrees, lost all sense of pain in frankly avowing her own. While thus hurried on, the sudden recollection of Lucien's situation, their approaching separation, the dangers he was about to run, the dreary blank which was to surround her, came upon her with tenfold anguish; and she shud-

deringly hid her head in his bosom, as if to shut out the frightful images which burst upon her view. She was again re-assured—again forgetful—and again terrified, by fears which possessed too much the consistency of truth to be treated as mere fancies. Lucien therefore combatted them with all the force of natural, yet boyish reasoning—and thus passed the remainder of the day. Mr. Lacourtelle was almost wholly alone. He retired to his own chamber, where he remained for several hours, seated at his *secretaire* with pen in hand, in some deep calculation of ways and means, or pacing the floor, with an anxious tread that kept time to the agitated feelings below. The dinner was a matter of mere form, and the early vegetable supper was placed on the table as usual, but taken off again untasted. More than half the night was consumed before any one thought of bed, and the rest passed over without the aid of sleep.

Lucien rose early, having previously heard

his father get up and leave his room; and on going down stairs himself he was surprised to learn that Mr. Lacourtelle had some time before mounted his horse and ridden away, leaving word for Lucien and Valerie that he had gone to Amiens, and would not return before night. Whatever might be the sudden business that called him away, the young couple, thus once more left to themselves, most heartily rejoiced in his absence; and they could scarcely believe it possible, when the well-known trot of the old horse, and Mr. Lacourtelle's arrival, told them that the day was gone.

Mr. Lacourtelle was affectionate, but silent and thoughtful. He retired early to rest, evidently fatigued and ill at ease in mind. Lucien and Valerie were unwilling to disturb him by inquiries as to the business of his journey; and long after he retired they continued to consume the night in deep debate.

Worn out by the agitation of the previous days, Lucien slept heavily the following morn-

ing, and he sprang from bed with a sudden pang at seeing the sun full risen, and recollecting that this was the last day he had to spend at home. On the next the serjeant was to march with his little band of conscripts from Flixecourt, and this alone was left to Lucien to make his preparations for departure. He hastened below, and found Valerie waiting for him in the parlour, her eyes betraying the sleepless night she had passed, and her agitation proving how ill able she was to support this last sad day of preparation. Lucien learned with surprise that his father was again gone to Amiens, and could not repress an expression of astonishment that he had chosen to pass *this* day from home. But Valerie's kindliness of spirit found a ready reason, in her uncle's wish to be spared the pain of the previous hours, which are even worse than that of parting, and Lucien was easily reconciled to what left him another unbroken day wholly to Valerie and love.

Amidst all her sorrow, the considerate and

soothing attentions of her sex did not abandon the amiable girl. With a method and carefulness worthy of the most tranquil state of mind, she prepared all the objects destined to form the scanty provision of Lucien's knapsack. Lucien's vanity was deeply wounded when he had time for reflection, and read carefully over the undignified list, given to him by the serjeant, of articles which he was to carry on his back. Brushes for cleaning his own shoes brought no actual sense of degradation, as French philosophy is easily reconciled to any services performed for one's self. But what most hurt his pride was the limitation of *four shirts* in this shabby inventory. His father, like most people of his class in France, had full three times as many dozens of this luxury. Lucien himself had a large stock, independent of his right of inheritance to his father's. He could not, therefore, resist a blush of humiliation as he saw Valerie arrange *four* of the best and finest, with the collars and frills worked in her own neat

embroidery. From his own confession, this was his first feeling of distaste to the career he had so lately gloried in, and the wound it gave to his self consequence was, for the moment, more poignantly felt than even the misery of the morrow's parting. For, by a strange commixture of motives and feelings, that very parting contained the elements of consolation. The frequent insufficiency of events that are close to us to excite emotions as strong as those that spring from anticipation or memory, was fully exemplified on this occasion. The anguish of separation from her whom he now found himself to love so dearly, seemed to fall with a deadened and stupifying weight upon him; while the triumph of possessing her heart, the looked-for joy to be felt in the reception of her letters, the delight to be awakened by the perusal of his, the importance of the conviction that she lived alone for him, the very certainty of the pain his absence would cause her, contributed to give an additional swell to the tide of vaingloriousness

that heaved his mind, and raised it above the level of its immediate suffering.

Valerie's feelings were of unmitigated woe. She saw only the actual reality of the scene before her. The certain aspect of Lucien's departure was too painfully close to allow of distant ameliorations to soften its effect; and if she did, for an instant, carry her thoughts beyond it, it was only to withdraw them from the desolate waste of loneliness which broke upon her. She could not bear up against this, and warm drops of sorrow from her full eyes bedewed every object which, with affectionate care, she had selected for her lover's wants. The very lock of hair destined as an amulet to hang upon his breast was soaked in tears.

All was arranged—the minutest trifle was again and again examined; many superfluous nick-nacks, too insignificant for a soldier's comfort, were added by Valerie, and proudly, yet kindly rejected by Lucien: subjects of conversation exhausted, yet words fast flowing, when

the day closed, and night set in without any appearance of Mr. Lacourtelle. This absence, at such a time, was strange beyond imagining. The hours were counted by Lucien and Valerie, with increasing anxiety and agitation. The moon rose and sunk, the stars glimmered, twinkled, and hid themselves from the morning light, which came in upon the lovers, to find them pale and woe-begone. The servants had passed, like them, a night of anxious watching; and the whole party were out of the house by sun rise, distributed on the knolls and rising grounds, with anxious eyes turned in the direction by which the far-sought father and uncle and master should return.

CHAPTER V.

VALERIE and Lucien stood together on an eminence that rose above the garden, and overlooked, at some distance, the landscape, the chief features of which I attempted to sketch in the opening pages of this tale. The newly-risen sun had tinged the whole with his splendent colouring, and the soft grey tints of dawn gave a melancholy effect to the still and misty scene. The young lovers gazed upon it; he with feelings softened and subdued; she with a tenderness of woe, not inspired by, but in harmony with the material solemnity of the scene. Their looks were turned towards the road leading from Amiens, but their thoughts flew far

beyond its visible limit; for in that direction lay the route traced out for the conscripts, as that which they were to follow, in search of the army, of victory, and fame. While the lovers gazed thus, some acute recollection now and again rousing them from their reverie, and making them turn to each other with a closer expression of attachment, the rustic population of the valleys around began to fill the air with the harmony of morning sounds. The voices of the husbandmen, the songs of birds, the bleating of cattle, the hum of insects, were mingled together. The smoke rising up from scattered cottages and hamlets, gave a softened animation to the pastoral scene—and every thing of sight and sound combined to bring most painfully to Lucien's mind, the atmosphere of innocence and peace he was going to abandon, for the turmoils and perils of the world.

While he mused on the scene, and Valerie hung sadly on his arm, a startling and terrible sound broke upon them. It was that of a

drum, beaten in rattling defiance of all the quiet it disturbed, and of indifference to the torturing associations of thought which it aroused. Lucien almost sprang from the ground when his ear caught the long roll, which he knew for the summons to him and his fellow conscripts throughout the neighbourhood.

"For Heaven's sake, Lucien," cried Valerie, "what moves you so? Oh, say what it is."

"Do you not hear the drum, my own Valerie? My hour is come—that is the call which orders me away. I have but little more of time at my command. Let us hasten to the house. I must not seem unprepared when the serjeant arrives."

Valerie trembled with agitation. She did not attempt to speak. She could with difficulty walk; but summoning all she had left of resolution, and supported by Lucien, she reached the house. With hasty preparation, Lucien got his things in order. He had no assistance from Valerie, who sat in silent affliction on a chair

beside him; nor from either of the servants, as both man and woman, unaware of the nature of the signal, continued abroad searching for their master's approach, and were thus diverted from the more serious contemplation of her son's departure.

"Here he comes!" cried Lucien, looking from the window.

"My uncle — thank Heaven!" murmured Valerie, faintly, and rising from her chair.

"No, no, not my father—only the serjeant, accompanied by four or five of the conscripts, —of my fellow-soldiers, Valerie."

Valerie had nothing to reply, and sank down again upon her seat.

The rattling of the drum was now heard in quick approach, and the serjeant with his followers came forward in fantastic movement, dizened out with ribbons, and the recruits displaying that half-military costume and soldier-like air that seems to sit on them more easily than on the veterans of other nations, or at least

of ours. A rude coarse chorus of a song, was shouted by the group as they advanced, either thoughtless or wishing to be thought so. The serjeant flourished his cane, and twisted his mustachios, and encouraged the young soldiers by all the exciting trickery of an experienced quack. Lucien came to meet them at the door, welcomed them with an air of gaiety—and was for an instant animated into somewhat of his late feelings, by the profuse display of the serjeant's badges of honourable service and reward, and by the apparent or real recklessness of the conscripts. He briefly explained his personal readiness to march, only begging the serjeant to enter the house and wait awhile for his father's return, without which he declared he could not possibly start.

The serjeant, with a due display of courtesy and condescension, admitted the plea, and entered, leaving the youthful aspirants on the meadow before the door, jumping, running and

gambolling, to shew at once the lightness of their heels and hearts. An hour or more passed over in this way, the serjeant running on in praise of a soldier's life, in promises of fame, and in descriptions of battles, which almost turned Lucien's head with pleasure, and made poor Valerie sick at heart. But Lucien's attentions reverted soon again into their natural channel. He gave all his care to her, and no longer lent his ear to the serjeant, who, like any other actor with a heedless audience, got weary and impatient, examined his watch with peevish gesture, and declared that the hour of marching could be no longer delayed. Ere Lucien's rising insubordination had time to exhale in angry vapours, the servants both came running in, with a gleam of satisfaction in their mourning faces, and announced Mr. Lacourtelle's approach. In a moment more he was really seen, pressing his foaming and jaded horse up the straight avenue of elms that led from the road, and all

the lookers on were surprised to observe, that he carried behind him an additional pair of legs, while the face of a stranger was visible over his shoulder.

Arrived at the door, the person behind him sprang actively from the crupper, and as soon as he reached the ground, made a simple but rather graceful salutation to the group before him, marking, with the common politeness of his countrymen, his notice of Valerie by a particularly gallant obeisance. He was at first little heeded by any of the party, and least of all by her. Her whole attention was given to her uncle, who dismounted from his horse with a less active movement than his fellow passenger, and when fairly on the ground, he received the welcomes which were showered upon him, with a countenance in which pleasure showed its victory over fatigue.

"My dear uncle," sobbed Valerie, "I am, indeed, rejoiced at your return—but what could have kept you till the moment of Lucien's

departure—he is on the very point of setting off."

"Dry your eyes, my dear niece—he is *not* setting off—not going to move. Do you think any thing could have kept me away, but to keep him here? Come, Lucien, my boy, kiss your father once again—you are not to be torn from us yet."

A scene of real embracing here took place, not the mere cheek-to-cheek salutations of ludicrous formality, but the hearty hug of parental energy on the one part, and the ardent pressure of young affection on the other. But there was a difference still greater between the manner of Mr. Lacourtelle and his son's. The father's had that of positive certainty in the happiness he gave vent to; while Lucien shewed that bewildered air which proved him to take the good news upon credit. Valerie was almost overcome by the sudden change from sorrow to joy, but she eagerly asked her uncle,

"How is this? What do you say, my dear

uncle? Lucien does not leave us? For Heaven's sake explain—who has saved him?"

"This fine lad here," answered he, seizing the stranger's hand and cordially shaking it. "This gallant fellow, who has become his substitute, who goes for a soldier in his stead, and gives us all back to joy once more."

The stranger here brought so fully to notice, stood carelessly looking on with no air of conscious merit, for the services thus vaunted. He was about nineteen or twenty years of age, neither good-looking nor the contrary, somewhat rough in appearance, plain in his dress, and altogether putting forth no striking claims to attention. But Valerie at the time considered him as worthy of every possible distinction. It was one of those moments of the heart's supremacy, when thought and criticism are obscured, and when even the strict rules of common-place decorum are forgotten. Acting on the impulse of the instant, and abandoning the line of etiquette which manners prescribe to young French

women of all classes, she flew towards this unknown saviour of her happiness, and stretching forth her hand, she addressed him, with almost breathless rapidity,—

"Oh, Sir! let me thank you—do pray accept my gratitude—you know not how happy you have made me—you have preserved us from despair. How generous, how good you must be!"

She was checked in her rhapsody by a rather confused air in the young man, who seemed to receive her address with the awkwardness of conscious over-praise. She stopped suddenly, afraid she had gone too far, and her blushes were reflected on the stranger's cheeks.

"You must not deceive yourself, Mademoiselle," said he, "or rather let me undeceive you—you owe me no thanks. The man who sells himself for money, deserves no gratitude—I have had my price."

There was an uncouth tone in this speech, and in the manner of speaking it, that made

Valerie start back. The young man followed her with his looks as she retreated towards her uncle and Lucien, and he seemed anxious to make his eyes atone for the abruptness of his tongue. Lucien disliked his manner of gazing after her; and, endeavouring to compose his conflicting thoughts, he asked his father to explain the circumstances of this transaction. Mr. Lacourtelle replied briefly that the young man had consented to become a substitute for the conscription, after he had almost given up the hope of procuring one, on so short a notice, and for any thing approaching a reasonable recompence. Lucien was in the first instance almost overwhelmed with delight at the news of his escape; for in the anguish of parting from Valerie, he forgot for the time ambition, glory, vanity, self. But when he reflected, even for a moment—it was no more—a sudden pang shot through him, of mixed reproach, at thus shrinking from his duty, and of shame at suffering his father to buy him off; for he knew well that

his means were very limited, and that the sum paid for a substitute must have been, under the circumstances, enormous. Man was at that epoch a merchandize of monstrous price. Following the course of his impetuous thoughts, Lucien's first impulse was to inquire the sum thus paid for his release, and to decide on refusing his liberty if it were to cost his father dear.

"Tell me, father," cried he, "tell me, I beseech you, what have you agreed to give?"

"No matter, no matter, my boy—you are free—the money is not worth a thought."

"Yes, yes, it is though, if you are to be the sufferer. Pray tell me the sum you are to pay,"

"The matter is at end, Lucien. Ask no more these trifling questions."

"From *you* then I must demand this information," exclaimed Lucien, haughtily turning to the stranger, "you will not refuse to name the sum paid to you?"

"Ten thousand francs," calmly answered he.

"Ten thousand!" repeated Lucien three or four times. "Impossible—ten thousand francs for *you!* Such a sum is ruinous to my father. Never can I consent to these terms. My dear father, how could you accede to them? And *you*, how could you expect or ask such an exorbitant sum?"

"Because less would not get *my* father out of gaol."

A deep blush mantled on the cheeks of Lucien while this unhesitating answer seemed to convey a bitter reproach to the contrast his own conduct formed. He could not resist the unjust sentiment which rose up in his mind, of instantaneous dislike to the individual thus brought, as it were, into opposition with him. Turning abruptly to *his* father, he again exclaimed,—

"Father, I will not be a party in this ruinous proceeding. I know you cannot pay this sum, and I should therefore be only placing you in the position from which it appears this

individual has relieved *his* father. Valerie, one more, one last farewell; I must not consent to this."

"It is too late, my dear boy," said Mr. Lacourtelle, deliberately, "the money is paid."

"That, my dear father, cannot be—I know you possessed no such sum."

"I tell you, Lucien, it is all arranged. My old friend, Bonnard, the notary of Amiens, procured me the money. I have spent three days and nights in thoughts and efforts to complete the business, and thank Heaven it is done at last, and not too late! The money is paid."

"Yes, and my father free," said the stranger. "So nothing is now to be done but to let me depart with this worthy serjeant and these smart lads, my fellow-soldiers."

The serjeant, who had hitherto been a silent and somewhat impatient spectator, now stepped forward, and demanding from Mr. Lacourtelle more particular information on the subject of this exchange, received from the latter all the

documents and authority which justified him in resigning his claim on Lucien and accepting the volunteer. He was evidently much dissatisfied at having lost the handsomest of his recruits, but he had no excuse of objection to the substitute, and no pretence for murmur from the regularity of the documents presented to him.

Valerie was an agitated but still an accurate observer of this scene. She knew Lucien well and minutely, and she read truly all the various movements of his legible mind; but though her main attention was given to them, she could not fail to observe the marked and remarkable bearing of the young stranger. She caught every one of the few words which had fallen from him, and there was something about him which irresistibly commanded her esteem. The motives of his self-sacrifice were alone sufficient to have secured it, and there was an unreasoning sentiment also at work, which influenced without convincing her, to honour and cherish the man who had been, even for his own purposes, the

means of saving her lover. Anxious to throw the weight of her feelings into the scale where Lucien's fate seemed still balanced, she advanced towards him, and implored him to put no obstacles in the way of his father's and her happiness. She represented the money in question as so much dross, and so she thought it, for her young and frugal mind had never yet experienced the value of that *dross*. Lucien, in the rapid reckoning which he mentally ran over, endeavoured to lessen to himself the importance of the sum for which his father was involved. He was not a profound calculator—the amount at first appeared immense—but he gave his father credit for prudence, and took as much to himself for industry—and thus satisfied himself that this great sacrifice might in some way or another be soon redeemed. The insinuating tenderness of Valerie threw a seductive veil across the galling feelings which rose up, in shame of his retiring from the station which his honour seemed pledged for his maintaining. He

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shut his eyes upon the prospect of his own dissatisfaction and the reproach of others; and he yielded, without further murmurs, to the arrangement which substituted the name of Isambert Duflos for his, in the serjeant's muster roll, as it was already in the official papers procured by Mr. Lacourtelle.

Nothing material now retarded the departure of the serjeant and his party. At Mr. Lacourtelle's invitation they entered the house, and some homely refreshments were produced and hastily partaken of. The serjeant drank a half-bottle bumper of Burgundy to the health of the new recruit. The toast, with a warm wish for his happiness and safety, was pledged by Mr. Lacourtelle and the rest, Lucien himself not resisting the generous impulse, although he felt mortified in the conviction that all his pretensions to distinction were at the time eclipsed, by this self-devoted example of filial duty.

"And now, my good friend Isambert," said Mr. Lacourtelle, "I must complete my promise

of equipping you for your march. Our hurry at starting from Amiens this morning left no time for arranging even a conscript's scanty wardrobe. Here, I see, is the knapsack meant for my son. Take it, just as it is, ready packed, and I dare say well filled, for it has been the work of Valerie, I'll warrant it: has it not, Valerie?"

"Yes, uncle, it has; and I am happy if my hands have contributed to the future comfort of this gentleman."

She blushed deeply as she spoke; Lucien was crimson to the eyes, but he turned away to conceal this appearance; and Isambert made a short and not ill worded acknowledgment of Valerie's kindness.

"Now for his cockade," said Mr. Lacourtelle. "He cannot march without this badge of service. Where is it?"

"Here it is," said Lucien, taking it rather roughly from his hat.

"Come then, Valerie," added her uncle,

"sew it quickly to that of Monsieur Duflos. He will not, as a gallant man and a brave soldier, value it the less, from being placed in his hat by the hand which is joined with a warm and friendly heart. Out with your needle quickly, niece—make haste."

In a minute or two the cockade was fastened firmly to the side of Isambert's hat, and as Valerie handed it to him, apologizing for its being moistened with her foolish tears, he pressed the ribbons to his lips, and with a full expression, in eyes which Valerie discovered to possess much meaning, he said,

"I shall indeed value this cockade and promise not to disgrace it. The tears which wet it make it still more precious, and I may one day return it unsullied by any less sacred stain. I was before but a soldier from principle and duty—I am so now from sentiment and inclination. Adieu, Sir; farewell you, whose place I fill, and whom I shall endeavour not to dishonour by proxy—Mademoiselle, permit me, I

intreat, the happiness of pressing my lips to your hand."

Valerie stretched forth her hand, timidly but not unpleasedly—for Isambert's words, though she took them as mere phrases of courtesy, did not tingle disagreeably in her ears.

"Forward! March!" exclaimed the serjeant in a tone loud enough to have manœuvred a brigade. The drum answered the command—away went the gay and thoughtless youths, in straggling and irregular movement—shouting, singing, and flourishing their sticks. Isambert was the sole exception to this riotous departure. He went steadily forward, and seemed superior to those vulgar bursts of joy, or to its still more contemptible affectation.

The family group thus left behind stood for some time looking after the conscripts, as they traced their devious way across the fields towards the high road. Mr. Lacourtelle was the first to enter the house; Valerie followed, to prepare for him some solid and comfortable re-

freshment; and Lucien felt his bosom heave and sink alternately, as he pondered on the situation he now filled, and pictured the chances he had resigned.

CHAPTER VI.

In the monotony of country life, with no extraordinary events to mark its progress, time steals our best days from us unperceived; and though he only flies at his accustomed rate, we fancy that he must have added new feathers to his wings. It may, then, be well believed that, to use the common parlance, several months "passed rapidly over" the heads of our heroine and her lover. With her they formed but one bright, cloudless day; each minute of which was spent in communings with her own heart, and an interchange between its sensations and those of *his*. Happy in the certainty of his being with her, grateful for the good fortune which pre-

served him to her, she sought for no drawbacks to delight in the past, nor picture its decrease in what was to come. Loving and beloved, the object of her passion constantly with her, this seeming sameness did not tire her. She felt no want of change, for the modulations of affection vary without altering its chords.

Lucien's sensations were not so uniform nor so tame. Had they been so, he would not have been as happy as he was, for there was a stormy spirit in his mind that loved a more agitated atmosphere than this; and he had within him wherewith to create a fermentation even stronger than his temperament required. During the first months immediately following the events mentioned in the last chapter, he abandoned himself, with the forgetfulness of youth and love, to the indulgence of that passion which for awhile absorbed him. The soft delight which beamed from Valeric's looks, and spoke in all her tones, infected him with its delicious, yet enervating languor, and all his dreams of glory,

and his vows of industry were alike forgotten. Neither the army nor the farm were thought of. His mind revelled in inactivity, with a slothful voluptuousness proportioned to its usual vigour, as the relaxation of a bow-string is proportioned to its former tension.

Mr. Lacourtelle observed his son's indolence without seeking for its cause. He was too happy in having him spared to him, to quarrel with his course of life. His parental feelings had experienced so strong an excitement that they overpowered all others for awhile; and he was determined not to disturb the tranquillity of Lucien's present career, lest he might disgust him with his situation altogether, and force him to the pursuits from which he had just saved him, but which he still believed him in secret to wish for.

At length concurrent causes came about, to disturb this lethargy of love, and arouse the lover from that state of quiescent happiness, to be felt perhaps but once, and never to be described. The payment of the first instalments on

Mr. Lacourtelle's debt came round, and Lucien knew too well how much inconvenienced his father must be to provide for them, and felt too keenly how little *he* had contributed to the provision. The products of the property which they possessed were sufficient for the support of the family, in all the comfort suitable to their station in life; but at the year's end no surplus was laid by to meet any unlooked for exigencies. Mr. Lacourtelle, not expecting such, had not forethought sufficient to create a fund of the sort; and, in fact, until his son was drawn for the conscription, he had never experienced such a want. The consequences were to him most embarrassing. The ten thousand francs required for the substitute, on such short notice, were only to be raised by means of usurers; and their exactions, added to the charges of the *friendly* notary, made altogether a sum far exceeding the amount originally required. Bonds. bills, and mortgages were the consequent evils of the loan; and principal, interest, and costs, were

all engaged for by the borrower to be paid at certain half-yearly epochs, until the whole was cleared off, for which consummation the expiration of two years was the final limit.

When the first day of payment came, in six months after the debt was incurred, Mr. Lacourtelle found himself totally unable to meet his engagement. A delay was with some difficulty obtained; and accumulated interest and additional charges swelled out the original debt. It was at that moment that Lucien felt himself awakened from the trance in which he had been lulled, and poignant self-reproaches (for he met no others) assailed him. He could not conceal from himself that he had done nothing to assist his father in liquidating the debts created solely for him. He now swore to exert himself, and he kept his vow. For six months more he laboured hard, in the fields and in the farm-yard, at the neighbouring fairs and markets; in every way, in short, in which an agriculturist or cattle-dealer could labour. His father was, as usual, intel-

ligent and industrious—but every thing seemed to go wrong. The result was, that to meet the promised payments, stock was sold at a disadvantage, the harvest disposed of in expectancy and at undervalue, and the time to come deprived by anticipation of its profits. Sacrifices like these, sufficed to satisfy the griping creditors, but it was but a respite from the quick recurring day of settlement. Lucien suffered all the perturbed anxieties of a sensitive and ardent mind. He was no longer what he had been to Valerie, nor did he feel her influence to be the same. He was often abstracted in his manner and peevish in his temper; angry with himself for suffering his thoughts to wander from this dearest object, and still more discontented when he suffered his spleen to vent itself on her. But he loved her probably the better for those little sallies of ill temper—and certainly did not love himself the less to find, that, be his bearing what it might, *she* loved him daily more and more.

Isambert Duflos had not been forgotten by any of the party he had left behind him: Mr. Lacourtelle sometimes thought of him with pleasure, for he liked his manly straight-forward manners and conduct; and he could not help being a little vexed that this youth had not kept his promise of writing to him. Valerie, at times, caught in her mind's eye the figure of Isambert as he made his parting bow, and she retained a perfect recollection of every word of his farewell speech. Whenever Lucien's mind reverted to this substitute of his, it was with any feeling but that of kindness—a gnawing, envious, jealous, sensibility was always mixed with the recollection; and such is the unreasonableness of the human heart, that the more Lucien was convinced of its injustice, the stronger was his antipathy to this absent object of his self-created rivalry. Valerie, with the eagle eye of love, saw into the recesses of her lover's heart, and she abstained cautiously from all mention of the unwelcome name. Mr. Lacourtelle avoided

every topic that might lead Lucien's thoughts back to the channel from which he hoped to turn them entirely—and thus Isambert, though thought of often, was scarcely, if ever, named, until one day, after dinner, Mr. Lacourtelle suddenly threw down the newspaper, which he regularly received and carefully perused, and exclaimed with thoughtless pleasure,

"I knew it—I knew it well! There was something in him which promised distinction, and he has gained it already."

He then read the passage which caused his exclamation. It was from one of the bulletins of the army in Spain, which, in detailing the particulars of one of those every day victories into which the French generally magnified each trifling or doubtful affair, contained the mention of some officers and soldiers who had distinguished themselves by their bravery. Among others, it stated that "the Conscript Isambert Duflos had displayed the valour and steadiness

of a veteran, for which he was rewarded on the spot with the Cross of the Legion of Honor."

"I am glad of it, heartily glad of it!" cried Valerie, without any hesitation.

"And I, too, sincerely so," said Mr. Lacourtelle.

"I, then, am not!" exclaimed Lucien, with a fierce and almost furious expression of countenance. "He has robbed *me* of this—these honours should be mine. He stole into my place, and left me thus ingloriously and disgracefully to pine away my life, while he gains fame and fortune at my cost! Curse him, say I, and the evil hour in which he ever crossed my path!"

With these words he rose from his seat, and strode backwards and forwards in violent agitation. Mr. Lacourtelle and Valerie endeavoured to quiet him, for some time in vain. The former was astonished at this impulse of passion and almost hatred. Valerie felt no surprise, but infinite regret at the intemperate display of

feelings, which she knew to be in themselves unjust and in their avowal unwise. The whole scene lowered Lucien in her estimation, for she was not one of those lovesick maidens who shut their eyes upon their lover's faults or convert them into virtues. She rather looked boldly on the weakness she could not but disapprove; but affection held the balance in which she weighed both merits and defects, and no wonder if the latter flew upwards!

Lucien felt himself to be wrong, but that conviction made him the more positive. His father expostulated against his injustice towards Isambert, but he only replied by vehement invectives against this unconscious disturber of his peace.

"Yes! He has robbed me of these chances, of which he now reaps the harvest. He had no right to steal into my place without my consent. What have you, my father, got by this, but embarrassment and loss? What have I acquired but self-reproach and misery?"

At these words, his angry glances came in contact with the mild and sorrowful expression of Valerie's eyes. There was no actual upbraiding in them, but they spoke remonstrance in its softest tone. Lucien felt the appeal; and bursting from one impetuous strain into another, he continued—

"I am going too far, I acknowledge it. I should not have said all this. I do hate this Isambert for his success, for the fame he is acquiring, for the very good he has done me.—But I confess he has done me good. He has saved me to you, my dear father—and to my own sweet Valerie here"—and he was going on in a strain of that secret eloquence to which no third person should be a listener, when its blushing object felt herself called on to give him another, and a different kind of reproving glance, the influence of which he immediately acknowledged, by an abrupt conclusion to his rhapsody.

This scene made a deep impression on the

whole party. They all discovered that Lucien's military passion was as active as ever, and they each lamented the discovery; Valerie and her uncle, from their distinct sensations towards him, and he himself from the too evident truth that he had but deceived himself into the belief of his passion for Valerie being the leading impulse of his mind. From that day an increasing feeling of disquiet broke in upon the minds of Lucien and his father; and it ruffled the calm surface of Valerie's delight, like the night breeze that creeps upon the smoothness of a summer lake.

It was soon after this time that an event occurred in the neighbourhood of Flixecourt which promised to have a considerable influence on the fate of our hero and his friends; and was eventually, in no slight way, connected with it. This was the return of an emigrant family to their paternal mansion and the remnant of their property, after an exile of twenty years. When I say the return of *a family*, I should state that

only one of the family *returned*. The rest, though considering themselves French, had never seen France before. Monsieur de Villeforte had fled from the first symptoms of the revolution, a young man, without any plea but personal safety for the abandonment of his country, thus left by him and others a prey to the evils which that abandonment was sure to bring upon it. He now returned, advanced in life, with no reason for his return but that boast of the morbid patriotism so common and so sickening among men of his class. He had married in Germany, where his years of exile passed away, a wealthy and well born baroness; and he and his aristocratic spouse endeavoured to instil into the minds of their son and two daughters as much of their own prejudices as they could spare or the children receive. The young people, however, grew up (as is ordinarily the case with those whose teachers follow an overdone system), the exact opposites to their parents. The vagueness, the romance, the

ambiguity of German feeling, was deeply engrafted upon the warmth and the levity of French sentiment; and the young man and two girls came into the country of their ancestors with the greatest contempt for the memory of their ancient race, and filled with false notions, of freedom which never has existed, and of equality which never can exist, where both were talked of the most.

The Villefortes took possession of their empty and almost uninhabitable abode. The father and mother became unpopular the very first day on which their haughty and supercilious looks were visible to their scanty tenantry, and the other independent rustics who came to stare at the new comers. The cheerful and familiar countenances of the daughters and the unaffected bearing of the son won for them, on the contrary, the instant good-will of the beholders. They all descended from their travelling carriage, a solid, heavy, German machine, loaded with imperials, trunks, and cases, with richly

embossed mountings, and pannels proudly emblazoned with the family arms—a fortified castle, (rampant, I believe,) supporters, two twenty-four pounders; crest, a hand grenade, rising from a *chevaux-de-frise*; motto, I forget exactly what—but as appropriate as the rest, no doubt, to the hereditary power of the Villefortes. Besides the superior members of the family, contained inside, the external seats were filled with the chief domestics,—the *femme de chambre*, a stiff untoiletted spinster, the very antidote to French taste; the valet, a superannuated coxcomb, powdered and frizzed, with plenty of ruffles and a scarcity of shirt, a perfect epitome of the *ancien regime*; the coachman, round and rubicund; and the cook, well fed, sleek, and saucy. Besides these important members of the household, various inferior servants were bundled together in a species of *fourgeon* which followed close behind; and a variety of waggons, with baggage and provisions, and then a number of horses, dogs, &c., brought up the train.

This arrival was indeed an event in the retirement of Flixecourt; and the couriers who had preceded its approach, had given ample time for the curiosity of the village practically to display itself. The avenue leading up to the dilapidated mansion of the De Villefortes was consequently thickly lined, and the grass-grown court-yard, filled with the gaping witnesses of the spectacle. By mere accident, Lucien Lacourtelle made one of the crowd. He had been returning from a neighbouring village, where business had detained him the greater part of the day, and as he passed by the Château de Villeforte, which was within half a league of his home, he was attracted by the bustle of expectation presented by the scene. He had heard of the looked-for return of the emigrant family, from the spoils of which his father's property had been realized. He had no sympathy with these new comers, but he felt a somewhat insolent throb of self-consequence in witnessing the return of these proud aristocrats

to the partitioned scenes of their forefathers' greatness and tyranny. As the carriage drove up he gazed on it, undazzled by the display of feudal pride, and he felt a contemptuous sneer curl his lip as the travellers one by one descended from their seats.

Lucien stood upon the steps leading up to the principal entrance, surrounded by a number of the villagers. He had a good view of the different personages as they came forward. Mr. de Villeforte, leading the Baroness, first approached, and he was evidently mortified and displeased at the uncourteous deportment of the bystanders, who all kept their heads covered, and did not utter a shout, although the almoner, and the maitre d'hotel, who had arrived some days before to see the house prepared, had used many inducements with the stubborn rustics, to make their voices belie their hearts on this occasion. The impression made by the father and mother was, as I said before, unfavourable. The son next appeared, a frank,

good-tempered looking youth, smartly dressed, and smiling on those around him. He gave a hand to each of his sisters as they left the carriage, and he led them through the crowd and up the steps.

As soon as these young women appeared, a murmur of pleasure and admiration burst from the villagers. They were gaily and fashionably dressed, strikingly handsome, and their whole air and manner was condescending without appearing *patronizing*, and amiable without being overstrained. They bowed and smiled repeatedly to the salutations of those around them, and, as they came slowly up the steps, Lucien had a full view of them. It was hard, he thought, to say which of the two was the more handsome or pleasing; but one, evidently the eldest, particularly struck him, as possessing a peculiar air of what, if not exactly wildness, was something very like it. She had a bright and searching eye. She seemed to look for something or some one in the crowd, and an ex-

pression of adventurous inquiry beamed from her countenance, and gave to it, Lucien thought, a charm of infinite worth. As she came close, her glance seemed suddenly rivetted upon *him*. She almost started when her eye first caught his: she blushed, and trembled, and laid hold of her sister's arm, whispered a few words to her, and they both stood still, darting the most penetrating looks upon the object of their observation. Lucien had taken off his hat as they approached, and, with his flushed cheeks and curling locks, was certainly not an uninviting subject for the scrutiny of female eyes.

He was at first somewhat abashed, and felt awkward under this examination. But his native confidence soon rose to his relief, and he sent back the gaze of the chief examinist, with full as much determination as she put into her's. She, in her turn, seemed first confused, then pleased, and, during the two minutes' interchange of looks which thus took place, an undoubted and extraordinary sympathy arose between the

metaphysical young lady and the more material youth.

At length the peasants began to observe the scene. Its awkwardness was felt by the chief actors. The brother urged his sisters towards the house; Lucien involuntarily stepped back; and the young ladies entered the mansion, the eldest throwing one parting glance, into which she seemed to fling her whole soul at Lucien, and exclaiming, to her sister, in a half whisper, but loud enough for him to hear,

"Yes! 'tis he—'tis he! What an extraordinary destiny!"

Lucien stood for a moment quite bewildered. The words he heard, and the tone in which they were uttered, seemed the results of some magic combination. The looks of the young and lovely utterer had inspiration in them. *He* was clearly the object that had excited all this. He experienced an extraordinary rush of sensations, utterly new. He seemed no longer

the being of his own will; but felt, or fancied he felt himself the agent of some unknown and irresistible fate. He slowly quitted the crowd, and reached home, as it were, mechanically, for he remembered nothing, on arriving at the door, of any one of the thoughts or intentions which occupied him on the way.

CHAPTER VII.

Perplexing and unfathomable as this state of feeling appeared to my hero, I do not mean that it should long remain so to my readers. The fact was, that Henriette and Victorine de Villeforte had entered France, filled with feelings of the most romantic extravagance, and determined to find adventures on every possible occasion. The first arrival at the home of their ancestors was an event not to be passed over without one of these adventures; and, in pursuance of this conviction, Henriette, the eldest, resolved to dream a dream. She did so accordingly, whether sleeping or waking I know not; but as was fitting, and right and proper on the

occasion, she saw, in the shadows of her vision, the face and form of the youth who was destined to be, for ever and a day, her kindred spirit, her associate body, her torture and delight, her sunshine and her gloom, her bane and antidote—and all other sorts of things suited to the lover of a would-be-heroine of a patent romance. Resolved not to have all the trouble of this dream for nothing, she was bent on the discovery of the living image of this visioned face and form; and she, as a matter of course, communicated this revelation of fate to Victorine, on the special condition that she was to be *but* confidante, and on no account to presume to fall in love with her sister's already bespoken lover.

The day of arrival at the Château de Villeforte was looked for, hoped for, and dreaded, in due form, and with a fitting proportion of palpitations and presentiments. Every new post-boy that clambered up the sides of the post-horses at each new stage—every chance gamekeeper that lounged across the road—every straggling

courier that galloped towards her, was gazed at by Henriette with the shivering incertitude proper to be experienced on so nervous an occasion. But the unprepossessing looks of these vulgar individuals gave the lie to the expectation that any one of them was *her* hero in disguise. At length the carriage reached the château-gates, and Henriette's fidgetty pulsations beat higher and higher as she saw the throng assembled in the avenue and court-yard. The carriage went slowly on, and her eager eyes darted out of all the windows at once; but no face of beauty, no form of grace presented itself. Henriette thought she had never seen such a clumsy, clod-hopping assemblage of ill-looking beings. In fact, the Picardy peasants are *not* a well favoured race, and the conscription had taken away almost every youth of the province. Henriette was on the verge of despair. Can it be possible, thought she at last, that some juggling fiend has been paltering with me in a double sense? or words to that effect—for she had not

read Shakspeare. But she had read enough of German trash, bombastic caricatures on his sublimity, to have invocations in plenty at hand on an occasion like this; and she forthwith fervently prayed to be immeasurably plunged into the depths of a charnel vault, frozen up for ever in an iceberg, or engorged to perpetuity in the horrors of some wolf's glen, rather than not realize the brilliant destiny that had been promised her. This was her last prayer as she quitted the carriage, and it imparted to her eyes that impassioned extravagance which Lucien remarked when he saw her looking so wildly, but little imagining that she was looking for *him*. But so, however, it was; or, at least, turned out to be. Henriette saw that she had no time to lose, and she was resolved that the charm should be complete—the spell confirmed. She had thus, as she reached the top step in utter desperation, fixed her eyes on a gaping, white-haired, rosy-cheeked lout, the only look-at-able thing she had seen; and she began running over in

her mind the features of her dream, and convincing herself they were the prototypes of *these*—when the glowing beauty of Lucien's face, and the careless grace of his figure, in a happy moment caught her eye. The result of this discovery my readers know already. In a raptured whisper she told her sister she had at last found *him*; and though she acknowledged the eyes and hair to be of a different colour, and some of the features not the same as those she had so often described to Victorine as belonging to "the revealed one," yet she satisfied herself that she had seen him through some visioned prism, and that this, his flesh-and-blood representative, was the real, downright, destined object, who was to be her's for ever and ever. So much for the self-made heroine! and now for my hero, whom she was so desirous to have for *her's*.

Poor Lucien thought himself certainly bewitched. But there was, after all, no sorcery employed to make him lose his head. He had seen these fine, blue beaming eyes fixed upon

him, had heard the words which alluded to him and destiny together, and he thought he must be a charmed man. And so, in truth, he was —but merely by the natural spells of his own vanity, which told him, in an instant, that this fair charmer of his was over head and ears in love with him. That was quite enough to set him beside himself, to make him forget all the rest of the world, and to convince him he was acted on by fate, as a person prepares himself for animal magnetism, by believing in the operator, or persuades himself he *ought* to be a poet or a painter, because a phrenologist finds a certain bump upon his skull.

The evening of this momentous day was one of perfect abstraction on the part of our hero; and while his father and Valerie pitied the keenness of what they supposed his suffering at the accumulating difficulties of the family, he was as free from care as they might have been of compassion. *Something* told Lucien that he should hear more of the witching Henriette,

whose name he had made himself master of, and that flattering whisperer, so often false, did not on this occasion tell a lie. The very next morning a very civil message was brought from the château, by a footman, that the young ladies accompanied by their brother, meant to have the pleasure of paying a visit that day to Mademoiselle Valerie, and the Messieurs Lacourtelle, father and son.

This message was tormenting to Mr. Lacourtelle, startling to Valerie, and electrifying to Lucien. The promised visit assorted ill with the anxious state of the father's mind, or with the revolutionary contempt and dislike which he cherished towards the emigrants; and, to avoid it, he left the house, and occupied himself in the most distant part of the farm. Valerie busied herself, with her natural promptitude and good taste, to make homely, but hospitable preparations for the expected guests; and Lucien flew to his toilette, and decked himself out, in the manner most becoming to the occasion—and to

himself. Thus prepared he looked most strikingly handsome, and Valerie felt so proud of him that she longed almost as much as he did for the arrival of the visitors.

They at length arrived. Valerie had too much of native good sense, and was sufficiently like the generality of her countrywomen, to feel any great alarm or evince any extraordinary shyness at the visit of two fine ladies and their attendant fine gentlemen. The revolution had destroyed the feeling which attached notions of awe to the very name of greatness; and men and women in France, as they ought elsewhere, knew the proper limits which should mark their respect for rank and wealth. For that due to wisdom and virtue there should be no bounds. But even if Valerie had laboured under the senseless dread which was formerly inspired by the very name of nobility, the manners of its representatives, who now visited her, would at once have put her at ease. The frank and unaffected air of Camille de Villeforte, and the

easy and winning manners of his sisters, won Valerie's heart. Henriette in particular was perfectly delightful—but Valerie did not all at once perceive that it was because she was in love. Lucien, however, whose observation was sharpened upon the keen edge of personal vanity, saw through the cause at a glance; and he perceived that Henriette was pleasing, chiefly because she wished to be so. An hour sufficed to make the whole party familiarly acquainted, if not exactly intimate friends; and Henriette insisted that they should go in search of Mr. Lacourtelle, in order to make him one in the bond of union in which she meant to be joined with the whole family.

"Ah, yes, my dear Valerie," said she, as they passed through the little garden, hand in hand. "Yes, there is such a thing as pure friendship, ethereal sympathy, and this is it! I panted, sighed for this. *Something* told me I should find friends here, in these our old paternal fields—and I have found them."

The more than tender look, sent full into Lucien's face with the concluding words of this speech, gave Valerie a turn, she could scarcely say of what kind. She had been pleased highly with the courtesy and graciousness of Henriette's manner, and she was almost disposed to receive, with the same readiness with which it was offered, the abrupt intimacy so warmly proposed to her. But this overflowing declaration of friendship at first sight (a thing as impossible as love at first sight is natural) filled Valerie's mind with a doubt and a dread that she could not repel; and she felt herself change colour two or three times, during the short pause that intervened between Henriette's speech and Lucien's reply.

"Why don't you answer, Valerie?" asked he; but quickly turning to Henriette, he continued, "let me speak for her, she is overpowered by your kindness. But she does not feel the less, I vouch for it, the warm glow of those divine sentiments which you inspire—that

exquisite sympathy which I trembled with the moment I first gazed on you."

"My dear, dear friend!" cried Henriette, taking Lucien's hand, and looking a thousand meanings full in his face. He pressed the tips of her delicate fingers to his lips as if his sensibility was afraid of venturing a more substantial embrace.

"Yes, yes!" continued she, "this *is* happiness—this balmy morning—these verdant fields—these heavenly sensations! Yes, yes, the destiny which was revealed to me in slumber was not a deception—I feel that there is a secret link, a mysterious bond which binds us to each other—a still deep voice which whispers that we belong to each other for ever!"

"The devil we do!" said Lucien to himself, or some inward interjection of like meaning; for he was utterly electrified by Henriette's speech. He had no notion whatever that matters were going so fast, or so far. His brain had been

turned round and round, by all that had been passing, but only one word was wanting to bring him to his senses; and Henriette had furnished a whole sentence. He stood for a moment astonished, and somewhat ashamed of himself, while she pressed his insensible hand between hers, and gazed on him with a melting expression in her full orbed eyes. But his were mechanically turned towards Valerie, and were at once rivetted on the sad and almost terrified expression of her countenance. In an instant the confusion of Lucien's head and heart was at an end. Ideas and sentiments recovered their own proper places; and as soon as they did so, words, their audible representatives, came glibly enough to our hero's command. He could have spoken, he thought, any thing at the moment—but the first thing that pressed for utterance was some reassuring expression to his beloved Valerie. Prudence, however, stood sentinel at his lips, and repulsed the imprisoned speech that would have rushed beyond them. But it sought

another mode of communication, and the very words he would have spoken, filled his eyes with a meaning as legible as a written scroll. A lightning glance from those of Valerie sent back a full reply; and they both stood as satisfied of each other's sentiments as though an hour of speech had amplified their condensed but eloquent expression.

This was a crisis as positive as a medical man could require in any case of moral or physical derangement. Henriette stood as still as though Comus had touched her with his wand. Her brother and sister, who knew her ways, and were a good deal infected with her weakness, remained silent witnesses of the scene. Lucien's and Valerie's occupations I have already stated, —and while the whole group stood thus immovable and speechless, Mr. Lacourtelle stepped through a gap in the hedge close by. His mind was amply filled with the consideration of his embarrassments, and he had forgotten the promised visit from the young de Ville-

fortes. He started, therefore, in surprise, and that expression was changed to a look of displeasure, as he thought that this silent convention was purposely lying in wait to entrap him nto an interview. Lucien stepped towards him, and announced the names of the strangers; but the rough and independent manners of the father were not softened by the son's insinuating tone, and he asked with unusual harshness,

"Well, and what do they do here? I have no business with them, nor they with me. If you and your cousin choose to receive their visits, do so; entertain them as you like, but let me be freed from this intrusion."

And he was turning abruptly away, when Henriette stepped forward, her face still beaming in the glow of the energetic feelings she had just expressed to Lucien. She made a most graceful salutation to Mr. Lacourtelle, and with a voice of respectful softness and words of soothing gentleness, she expressed, on behalf of herself

and all her family, the pleasure they felt in the prospect of a frequent and intimate intercourse with him and his. There was an irresistible charm in Henriette, when she confined herself within the bounds of rational demeanor. It was only in her flights of romance that she wounded sense by her exaggerations of sensibility. Mr. Lacourtelle thought her quite bewitching, and he no longer opposed a surly incivility to the advances so condescendingly made. He replied in kind and civil terms; and the brother and sister followed up Henriette's overtures by some well turned and courtly compliments, the natural language of good breeding, and which even churlishness itself can seldom withstand. Mr. Lacourtelle immediately became one of the party, returned with the others to the house, and joined Valerie and Lucien in the escort which they gave to their new friends on part of their way to the château.

Mr. Lacourtelle was a shrewd man, still young enough not to overlook the manners of

younger people, and he was not slow in observing in those of Henriette, her decided admiration of his son. In the actual state of his affairs, such a symptom was of too much importance to be merely observed and then forgotten. He treasured up his remarks; and a new train of thought was opened to him, in the matrimonial associations which presented themselves to his mind, and in the fair chance, thus possibly within his reach, of securing, by good management, his own relief from present embarrassments, and Lucien's ultimate elevation in the world, with his exemption from the military life, which was to the fond father the worst of evils.

Every encouragement was given by Mr. Lacourtelle to this new intimacy, so auspiciously begun. He talked incessantly for several days in praise of Henriette, and spoke in such terms of her beauty, her manners, and her evident fancy for Lucien, as made *him* at times again and again almost beside himself with gratified vanity, until a glance at poor Valerie's speaking coun-

tenance once more recalled him to himself and to her. Still the visiting went on. Not a day passed without Henriette's appearance at Mr. Lacourtelle's; a card from Mr. de Villeforte was left by a footman at his door; and Valerie's heart and Lucien's head were in a perpetual state of perturbation, in spite of their reciprocal efforts to keep each other calm and steady. But though Henriette, hurried on by this *impulse* of hers, was resolved to give destiny no loop-hole to escape from the result to which she held it pledged, there was nothing in her conduct or manners unbecoming the bearing of a modest and right thinking enthusiast. She went too far, as we have seen, in her words, and perhaps her looks gave to them, even, a too strong emphasis. But her thoughts had nothing impure in them; her feelings were generous and warm; and it was evident to all who knew her, that were her extravagance tempered down by experience, she possessed many of the elements of a fine character. She was under twenty years

of age, and her sister and brother, who in a great measure took their tone from her more marked peculiarities, were still younger than she. They accompanied her visits, which were ostensibly made to Valerie, but virtually designed for Lucien; and they served merely to fill up the interstices left in the main action by the occasional lassitude of their over-excited sister.

But although this new connection gave a respite to the feelings of pecuniary annoyance which had been pressing so hard on Mr. Lacourtelle and his son, it by no means (but in the expectancy of the former), removed the cause from which they arose. Month after month had been passing over with all Mr. Lacourtelle's pledges of payment unredeemed, and disappointments, excuses, and importunities had followed the course usual on these occasions, until at length the latest day of settlement came fast approaching, for the two years had but a small portion of their extent to run. Several plans of relief were debated between father and son; and it

was at length resolved, that the latter should go once more to Amiens, where he had been frequently before dispatched, to make another effort to gain time from *the friendly* notary, (who had at length thrown off the mask and shewn the native deformity of extortion)—and if that failed, he was to propose, as a last resort, that a small portion of the property was to be actually sold to satisfy the claims of this man, and the brood of kindred harpies whom he represented. Bitter were the feelings with which this sacrifice was at length determined on by Mr. Lacourtelle, but those of Lucien were infinitely more acute.

The appearance of a letter had been for some time past a painful sight to both, for scarcely any had lately arrived that did not contain a reproach, an insult, or a threat. The very morning fixed for Lucien's visit to the notary brought one of those arrivals, so long looked on with loathing. The letter lay for some time on the breakfast table before Mr. Lacourtelle

would break the seal or look at the superscription. At length he took it up. He saw that it was not directed in any of the well known hated writings, but that a strange hand, and foreign appearance marked the epistle to be from a less familiar, and more distant correspondent. He broke the seal, looked at the name at foot, found it to be that of Isambert Duflos; and he immediately began to read the letter aloud, forgetful for the moment, of the annoyance formerly excited in Lucien by a less direct communication from the writer. The letter was brief, friendly, and communicative. It told of Isambert's success, with the firmness and modesty combined with which a man should view and speak of his own merits. Isambert was superior to the affectation of concealing the results which good conduct alone could have gained him. He told of prize money acquired and of promotion promised, and he concluded by cordial expressions of good will towards each

member of a family for which he ventured to express a more than common interest.

Lucien did not on this occasion allow of any outbursting of his feelings, even if they arose in their former violence; but leaving all comment on Isambert's letter to his father and Valerie, he embraced them both, mounted his horse, and set off with a full heart on his almost hopeless mission.

CHAPTER VIII.

Lucien proceeded on this journey of a few miles, with feelings of intense suffering, and of as serious a nature as are commonly endured by men leaving their homes on voyages of hundreds of leagues. His sensations were of a mixed and agitating kind, with scarcely one of solace or satisfaction. This letter of Isambert aroused, once more, all those dormant feelings of ambition which less noble excitements had obscured; and the pang with which he contemplated the rapid success of this youth, in the path of reputation and riches, was aggravated by all those harassing emotions which had been so long preying upon him. The two years of stipulated credit had expired.

This very day completed the term; and he was now proceeding on that most painful of services to a high-minded man—the request for indulgence from a harsh creditor; and there are few indeed, who, being creditors at all, can resist the ungracious temptation of shewing to their debtors that they have at least *the power* to be harsh and humiliating. And, added to all these sources of pre-existing disquiet, Lucien had now full opportunity of reviewing his late state of feeling with respect to Henriette de Villeforte, and the consequences emanating from it, relative to Valerie. He was deeply dissatisfied with himself. He could not blind himself to the display of weakness and vanity which his secret emotions had betrayed; he saw that the blandishments of beauty, rank, and flattery had acted on him as the wind upon a weathercock; and he felt himself to have been kept steady in his fidelity to the sweet girl to whom he had over and over sworn it, but by the attraction of her decorous grace, and its visible contrast with the

ardent impetuosity of her who had, even for one day, seduced him from his allegiance. He had, it was true, recovered from that lapse of faith; but he felt it to be the power of Valerie's charms, not his own innate loyalty, that saved him; and even at the moment of this self-accusing, he could not be insensible to the intoxicating delight, with which his memory reverted to Henriette's manifest admiration; and at the very instant that his mind beamed brightest in the consciousness of Valerie's love, this spurious thought came across it, as a meteor glares in the sky that is luminous with moonlight purity.

Thus agitated, dissatisfied, and almost desponding, Lucien reached Amiens, and prepared for his visit to the notary. But he required a considerable delay before he could quite bring his mind into proper tone to meet the combination of trickery and impertinence, which, from former visits to the same person, he knew he had to expect. The day was waning fast; he had eaten his solitary dinner at a comfortless inn; had

sauntered for some hours on the public walk, called l'Autoy, close to the river Somme; had paced for the hundredth time the aisles of the cathedral; and the sun of a soft evening in spring, was sinking quietly to rest behind the shelter of the rising grounds westward of Amiens, when Lucien at length determined to repair to the house of the notary, and turned into the narrow street where it stood. He approached the well remembered and open door of the shabby little mansion; and advancing half way into the passage, he pulled the greasy bell-cord which hung beside the wicket, that prevented a nearer approach to the legal sanctuary where the notary sat enshrined, the high priest of chicane. An old woman servant answered Lucien's call, and replied to his inquiries, that Mr. Bonnard was in his study; and she forthwith admitted him, opened the study door, and announced his name.

But the tone of her feeble voice made no impression on the closed up tympanum of the notary's ear. He was fast asleep in his elbow

chair by the chimney side; and Lucien stood for a few seconds in the middle of the little closet-like chamber, before he knew for certain that Mr. Bonnard was not awake.

He had all the appearance of waking life, he sat stooping forwards, as was his custom, towards the table before him, his pen was held mechanically between his fingers and thumb—his spectacles were balanced loosely on his nose—his black cap covered his head—and his flowered silk dressing gown displayed its usual arrangement of folds. Mr. Bonnard had a habit, common to many men of business in France and elsewhere, of leaving a person for some seconds standing, without taking any notice of them, possibly from fear of interrupting the chain of their own thoughts, *probably* from a notion that they give themselves importance by this apparent abstraction and certain incivility. Lucien knew this habit of the old notary, and he was therefore not sure that he slept, until an audible evidence or two spoke to the fact from

the witness box of the notary's proboscis. He snored most refreshingly, and Lucien stood looking at him as he snored. Age and cunning had shrivelled his cheeks, and wrinkled his brow, and given a peculiar compression to his features, visible even in sleep—and perhaps since that day in death. The tell-tale expression of the little grey eyes was lost to our observer, but his memory raised the lids that covered their piercing and dissembling glances.

The room contained the usual mixed display of professional and provincial littleness and greatness, which is to be seen in the office of a country practitioner. A mahogany book case shewed within its glass door many volumes of well bound works on law, and some on equity, the latter of which contained no infection for the touch of the old notary. Some loose shelves, from which hung draperies of green stuff, were also loaded with the labours of those who poured the blaze of their literary and legal lights to keep the world in the dark. Some portraits of

dead judges, on whom in their turn the public had passed sentence, hung against the walls, a posthumous and unpremeditated indication of their deserts; and one or two pictures of legal punishments, the pillory and the gallies, filled the vacant spaces, mementos as fitting to the place and to its occupant, as paintings of limbo and purgatory, to the confessional of a jesuit. Several square pasteboard boxes decorated the shelves fixed round the room, marked with the names of various clients, whose hopes and happiness had many a *lien* upon them within. The table at which Bonnard sat, was thickly covered with bundles of papers tied up and labelled; account books and pamphlets; some loose sheets newly copied; and one lying close under his pen, which had been just tracing in a cramped and crabbed hand, lines that Lucien thought likely to be the death-warrant to some family's peace. He stood for awhile fixed to the spot, in silent observation of the scene thus sketched, and of the old sinner who formed its

illustration. A long train of reflections passed rapidly through our hero's brain. He saw before him, and he mused and moralized upon the sight, a hoary extortioner, whose griping hands had strangled the hopes of many a confiding novice, and picked the pockets of many an easy dupe. "There," thought Lucien, "sits in death's mimicry, the very man whose false friendship has led my father and myself into years of distress and discomfort—the ready instrument of ruin to every unfortunate, who, sinking in the waves of want, catches at the rottenest reed that promises relief. What an infected atmosphere I breathe in! How this den of infamy is filled with the foul odours of roguery and baseness! Surely when this old man quits the world, this house will smell strong of brimstone! I am sick of being here. I seem to form one in the firm of villainy, of which that shrivelled wretch has never till now been a sleeping partner. Am I indeed then joined with him, even in temporary communion?

Perhaps Providence has thrown me into this fellowship for some good end. Let's see—what papers are those?"

Thus thinking, Lucien approached on tiptoe towards the table. Curiosity was not exactly the propelling motive. A concealed impulse of individual benefit, an instinct of self-interest was working within him. He thought, without reflecting on it, that the proofs of his father's debt, the instruments that worked his distress might be at the moment within his grasp. He advanced, he touched the table lightly with one hand, sent strained glances among the papers scattered round, held in his breath, threw a piercing look across the room to see that no one lurked. "Perhaps," thought he, "the devil *is* really here—watching the prey he has secured, and prowling for more!" He paused a moment, shocked by the thought, but the temptation, or possibly "the *tempter*," was too strong. He eagerly looked over the papers, held his ear close to the sleeping notary, scrutinized, at once,

the old deceiver's visage, and his records—and he saw, while his heart seemed bounding in his throat, the bonds, bills, mortgages, writs, and judgments, which seemed heaped together to crush his father to the earth.

It was no time for half measures. He had gone too far to recede. Desperation seemed to swell his pulse, to steady his hand, and stifle his conscience. He hesitated no more; but with cautious touch he selected all the papers connected with his father's case, put them carefully into the breast of his coat, and buttoning that close up to his throat, he stole gently across the floor. He threw one keen glance at the old man, and assured himself that he still slept. "All's safe! Thank Heaven!—or, God forgive me! I know not which to say," inwardly muttered he; and softly opening the door, he went out on tiptoe into the passage, crept slowly on, fearful of attracting the old woman's attention, reached the wicket, raised the latch, passed this last

barrier, gently closed it again, and in a moment more was standing in the street.

But the very moment he reached the open air, no sooner had he escaped from the atmosphere of sin which was behind him, than his conscience awoke, and smote him with a giant's strength. "What have I done!" exclaimed he, shudderingly, "What deed of felony have I effected! Valerie, Valerie, what would'st thou say to this! No, no, this must not be. Exemption even from ruin must not be purchased at this price! Let me hurry back, ere the hoary villain awakes."

With thoughts like these, almost audible, and feeling as if every artery of his body had thrown their fountains into his glowing face, he retraced his way. But he no longer stepped like a skulking felon. He trod the passage with a firm foot, as suited an honest and honourable man. Knowing the way of opening, and having no ceremonious announcement to send forward, he raised

the wicket latch, and steadily opening the door, he was once again in the middle of the notary's room. Be the influence what it might, he was no sooner there than he half repented his return, and for an instant was again tempted to keep fast his booty and escape! But his better feelings prevailed. He stood close to the table, the dusky shade of evening came through the single window into the dim chamber, and left Lucien's face and figure half in gloom. The notary fronted the window, and as he looked musty and shrivelled, like one of his own iniquitous parchments, Lucien could not resist the inclination, prompted by his fermenting blood, at least to give a fright to his father's persecutor. Instead, therefore, of replacing the securities, as he had just intended, he held them closely in his bosom; and in a hollow voice he called the notary by his name.

"Who calls, who calls me?" stammered Bonnard, starting half up in his chair.

"Your old friend," deeply murmured Lucien.

"Who? What? God preserve me, who are you?" tremblingly cried the notary, while in his efforts to distinguish Lucien's half revealed figure he let fall his spectacles, and recovering them, had nearly upset the table.

"What, don't you know me?" said Lucien, in the same voice.

"Saints and Angels save me?" exclaimed the old man, sinking on his knees, and putting up his hands in the attitude of prayer.

"What, you *don't* know me!" uttered his tormentor, in his own natural voice. "Who did you take me for? The devil?" and he could not resist bursting into a loud fit of laughter.

"*Who* are you?" said Bonnard, jumping up on his feet, "Is it possible?—are you—"

"Yes, to be sure I am," said Lucien, advancing, "your old friend's son, Lucien Lacour-

telle. Is it possible you don't really recollect me?"

"What, who? Lacourtelle? Oh God! where are my spectacles? The bonds, the mortgages, the judgments! where are they? where are they? I'm undone, I'm lost for ever!"

While he uttered these broken exclamations, he groped about in vain for the important documents, seemingly forgetful of Lucien's presence, yet instinctively suspecting him of the roguery which, in his situation, *he* would have surely practised, and not repented of.

"Come, come, Mr. Bonnard, do not, pray you, ruffle yourself so much about a trifle, what have you lost?"

"What have I lost? what is at this moment of the utmost importance to me."

"Only your character, I hope," continued Lucien, laughing, "for you can easily find a better, you know."

"Mr. Lucien Lacourtelle, what do you dare to say to me?" cried the notary, fiercely looking

upon his visitor; but forgetting his insulted reputation for what he valued much dearer, his threatened interest, he turned once more in great agitation to the table, and recommenced his useless search.

The old rogue's perturbation gave Lucien more time for thought. He saw himself the possessor of the whole of these important papers. He little doubted their containing ample evidence of Bonnard's exactions and cheatery. He did not scruple to make a fair advantage of what he possessed; and such he considered insisting upon terms of indulgence for his father, and a relinquishment of all the surcharges on the original debt, with legal interest to the day of payment. He felt that he had the power, no matter how acquired, to procure these conditions, and he was resolved to use it. I must here beg of the reader to recollect that I am only stating facts, not defending opinions, and leaving him to draw his own inferences and moral.

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After some minutes hopeless scrutiny, the poor notary gave his documents up as lost, and himself also, and he sank into his chair in a state of almost childish exhaustion. He bitterly bewailed his fate, and only expressed a hope that, as Lucien must certainly have robbed him, he did not mean to murder him too. There is always something in sorrow, be the sufferer ever so worthless and abject, that moves the pity of a generous mind. Lucien could not, therefore, help feeling compassion for his unworthy victim, although he was angry with himself for his weakness. He drew a chair close to the notary's, and sitting down beside him, he said,

"Well, well, Mr. Bonnard, be composed and comforted. I am not going to murder you, nor have I exactly robbed you; but I confess I have all the deeds and papers which are connected with your iniquitous treatment of my father."

"What, all?—*All* the papers, the calcula-

tions of interest, the private agreement with the lenders of the money—the *private* agreement?"

"Aye, every one of them—all I tell you," exclaimed Lucien, in a firm tone, and he hoped as firmly as he spoke, that he *had* all.

"Then I am utterly destroyed!" cried the notary, "that is to say, if your object be my destruction. But could we not accommodate this matter, my dear Mr. Lacourtelle? Could we not come to some compromise? Recollect your worthy father is one of my oldest friends—remember our long attachment."

All that Lucien wanted was a compromise, and he smothered his rising resentment at the effrontery of the wretch who invoked the shade of the friendship he had murdered.

"Well, well," said he, "I do not wish to ruin you quite, and I may perhaps consent to compromise this affair. Call for some supper and a bottle of your good old Burgundy, and let's see if we can't arrange matters amicably."

The notary felt like a criminal reprieved. He called his housekeeper, ordered an omelette, a fricassee, and a bottle of his best wine; and, with a couple of fresh fagots on the hearth, and a couple of cheerful bumpers before them, he and Lucien set to work to examine the papers and make out the conditions of the new treaty. Although Lucien was no lawyer, the last two years' experience had taught him something of law. He did not want clear-sightedness in a plain case of either honesty or fraud, and he could see that the latter was the leading feature in all the transactions which he had now to examine. Several hours passed over ere he had quite unravelled the web; but he was resolved to do his business completely, and he did not quit his chair, nor suffer Bonnard to stir, until a regular agreement was made out by the latter, and signed with his own seal of office, by which he renounced all claims upon Mr. Lacourtelle for a larger sum than six thousand francs, thus reducing his dishonest demands full

one half; and he granted him clear twelve months to pay the money. This done, Lucien returned the original bond to Bonnard, and deliberately thrust the other papers, one by one, into the fire, thus fulfilling that part of the compact which freed the roguish notary from all fear of prosecution, on the score of his usurious exactions and the illegal private agreement before alluded to, but which Lucien did not exactly understand till some time afterwards.

This consummation effected, both parties felt relieved of a weight of uneasiness. Lucien had nothing to regret; but mixed with Bonnard's self-gratulations was the deep and painful reflection, that he had lost by that night's work the fruits of two years wickedness. Lucien was preparing to take his leave, but he saw evidently that the notary laboured with some secret proposition, and he only delayed its utterance, until he had concocted the terms into which it might best be put. Lucien's impatience to know if any thing still lurked unsifted

or unexplained, induced him at once to bring the notary to the point, and he accordingly begged of him to unburthen himself of any matter, the disclosure of which might be to the interests of either. Thus pressed, Bonnard requested Lucien to draw his chair closer to the fire, and being so situated, the old man proceeded to speak, with a peculiarly knowing and significant expression on his wily face.

"Why, as matters have gone so far between us, Mr. Lucien Lacourtelle, it cannot be denied that, after this night's transactions, our mutual interests make a speedy payment of all accounts between your father and myself desirable, and that in common justice you must be anxious to get rid of my claim."

"Aye, of all connection with you certainly," interrupted Lucien.

"Nay, nay, don't be impatient; nor is there any need of foul words, Mr. Lacourtelle; but as you have violated all the rights of domestic security——"

"Foul words, you old slanderer! what do you call this?"

"Never mind, never mind, you are so impetuous—I was only stating my case—its my way—you must let me have my way—particularly as it leads to your own great advantage, Mr. Lacourtelle. Ha, ha, ha! that is the manner of putting an argument, isn't it, young man?"

"Go on, go on—take your own way, and come to the point."

"Well, then, as you have by violence—nay, nay, don't interrupt me—by stratagem, then, if you like the word better—you having by treachery—stratagem, I mean, forced me to relinquish claims to the amount of several thousand francs, you would in bare justice wish me to be paid what you acknowledge to be due, as soon as was convenient with your circumstances."

"Granted."

"You know that had you served as a soldier when drawn, the debt would not have existed?"

THE TANJORE MAHARAJA

"What next, Sir?"

"Very well! Now you know, this debt, in fact and justice, is yours, not your father's?"

"Well, Sir—Go on!"

"It is hard, you must confess, that he should be distressed for the payment?"

"Proceed, proceed!"

"And you disgraced by his suffering?"

"I can bear this no longer," cried Lucien, starting up and striking his hand against the table, "you work me into a fever. What is your object? What are you driving at? Nothing could move me but this. I am proud of the violence of which you accuse me—I glory in having been the means of punishing your vile extortions—your reproaches have no sting on that score. But when you remind me of my father's sufferings on my account, of my own indelible disgrace, you pay me back the pain I have cost you, and you put me beside myself. I will not endure this. If you have any plan—any *scheme*, let me say, to be more intelligible

to your mind and your habits—communicate it. Tell me how I can wipe out this infamous debt—by what self-infliction—by what sacrifice?——"

"By no infliction—by no sacrifice! But merely by making happy a lovely girl who adores you, who admires your manly character and fine person, whom these brilliant eyes of yours have played the very deuce with, Mr. Lacourtelle. Aha! I have made you smile, have I? And well you may smile, to have almost with a look, gained the heart of one of the loveliest girls in France, who will by and by possess an independent fortune of two hundred and fifty thousand francs."

"I was not aware that I smiled—but you have spoken laughingly, Mr. Bonnard. Out with your secret—it is but half revealed. What is the lady's name?"

"Henriette de Villeforte, you rogue—did not your heart tell it you?"

Lucien's heart had anticipated the notary's avowal, and it throbbed wildly at the mention

A thousand thoughts flitted across his brain. How could the notary have known her feelings —how speak so positively of them? An independent fortune of two hundred and fifty thousand francs! What a splendid possession! what honours might he not attain! Such were a few of the leading thoughts that crowded on him.

"Yes, yes," continued Bonnard, "you know it all—every one knows it—she only waits for your proposal—she expects it—in fact, she is yours for asking.—The deeds of her fortune are in that box."

"Mr. Bonnard, you must excuse my abruptness," exclaimed Lucien, "and I must leave you. I confess you have stirred up a world of feelings within me. I must have time for reflection. Good night! I shall probably see you again on this subject—but I am not certain. You are *sure* of what you say?"

"All of it—every word. The deeds are *there!*"

"Good night, good Mr. Bonnard, good night!"

And with these words, he rapidly quitted the house.

CHAPTER IX.

THOUGH Lucien once more emerged from the mansion of the notary, and was again at large, he did not seem to have recovered his liberty. A host of besetting fancies held his mind in durance, and he could not escape from their controul. He walked to his hotel, but when he arrived at the door, he hesitated to knock or ring. He felt that he could not sleep. He wanted exercise, not repose. His spirit seemed clogged and trammelled, and required the freshness of the open air. The night was far advanced, the moon was high in the heavens, and our hero felt himself to breathe and walk more lightly in its cooling beams. He turned away from the door

of his lodgings, and sauntered off, he cared not in what direction.

Those who have passed through the ordeal of young life's troubles, may form an idea of the conflicting emotions, which struggled for mastery in Lucien's breast. The words of the wily notary had sunk deep within him. This old master of his art had touched the chord, whose vibrations were sure to awaken the loudest echo in our hero's heart. His vanity, that pivot on which all his passions turned, had never been excited as now. His interest, that mainspring of action in all who breathe, was involved as it never before had been. His ambition was offered a field for its most unbounded display; but he *wished* to think all these as nought, compared to the opportunity promised him of proving the strength of his filial affection, of blotting out the record of his own dishonour—for such he had ever, but never so much as now, considered the fact of his father's embarrassments on his account. Every thing, in short, which

could excite or dazzle such a mind as his, was all at once combined to overcome him. The moon went slowly down into the grey mists of dawn, and the light of morning was faintly breaking through them, while Lucien paced, with a hurried step, the promenade where he had ruminated so long and so differently the preceding evening.

Many a wild phantasy of honour and distinction, of wealth and glory, was conjured up by his imagination during that night walk; many a throb of pride was swelling through him, but mixed with, combating, and finally conquering all, was the brighter, the better feeling of his young affection, in all its fervour, and purity, and holiness. Love and Valerie came triumphant through the struggle.

"Yes, thus let me be tempted," cried Lucien, half aloud; "the love that suffers no assay can shew no purity! Let the whole phalanx of worldly lures beset me, I can withstand them all. With her bright smile to cheer me on, I

tread the labyrinth of mortal guiles unharmed. Her bosom is the haven of my hopes—there sheltered, I can smile on the syren blandishments of life."

Elevated by these feelings, he walked up and down the beaten path of the public promenade, his mind elate in conscious rectitude, and his heart swelling in the pride of its unshaken fidelity. While he paced along in this mood, a distant sound came onwards, breaking the stillness of the morning. It was the mixed noise of carriage-wheels, and the clattering of many horses at full trot. Lucien stopped and listened, marvelling at such an interruption at so early an hour, and wondering what cavalcade could be travelling at such speed. The sounds rapidly approached, and in a little while he distinguished through the haze a troop of about fifty dragoons coming forwards, and escorting three close carriages, with six horses each, which were driven at the quickest travelling pace. Several officers and equerries were mingled with

the troopers, although Lucien was then ignorant of their distinctions. The *cortège* passed him with a rapidity that seemed to make him whirl round. Curiosity was baffled in attempting to distinguish the persons inside the carriages by that imperfect light, and conjecture was totally puzzled as to who or what they could be. The first notion that struck Lucien was, that they were prisoners of state, hurried on towards the capital, perhaps for trial; but while he cogitated, he observed that the whole party turned sharply down a little road to the left, and in a few minutes a cessation of all noise told plainly that they had stopped somewhere close by. Pleased with the hopes of discovering something more of these mysterious travellers, he ran rapidly on in the direction they had taken; and just as he turned into the narrow road the carriages had struck into, he met an officer trotting briskly forwards, as if going back into the town. Lucien was never over-diffident when he wanted information, and he therefore unhesitatingly

touched his hat, and asked the officer if he might venture to inquire who were the travellers that had just passed him. There was something at all times particularly striking in Lucien's appearance and manners, and the animation of his late sensations, and his immediate anxiety for information, might have heightened at the moment his usual air and address. The officer pulled up his horse, looked at his questioner, as if he measured him from head to foot, and answered,

"My lad, you ought to know who it is that has passed you. Every Frenchman ought to know it by instinct, almost; and such a fine handsome fellow as you are, should not be so long without having seen—aye, and fought by the side of the emperor."

"The emperor! was it he that passed me? I did indeed feel my head turn round. Is it possible it was he?"

"Aye, that it was, my lad; and you shall see him presently if you wish it. Go on there,

and wait for me at the gate of yonder château —I shall be back directly—and I will get you admittance to see his majesty pass the garrison in review."

As the officer galloped off, his short cloak was blown on one side, and Lucien remarked, with the respect which grandeur always made on him, that the officer's breast was covered with gold lace, ribbons, clasps, and medals.

"Such might I one day have been! Such will Isambert be!" thought Lucien, as his eyes remained fixed on the turning of the road where the officer disappeared. But his attention was quickly roused by the rapid coming of two or three more officers and soldiers, galloping one after another at short intervals towards the town. Our hero let them pass, with only an admiring and envious look sent after each. He walked quickly towards the château, which lay in a hollow on the left. At the large wooden gate stood two sentinels, whom he did not attempt to approach; but he loitered near, anxi-

ously waiting the officer's return. Several horsemen passed out of the gate while he watched, all at full gallop, and some returned; but half an hour elapsed before he recognised the one he wanted. As soon, however, as he appeared, Lucien ran forward and reached the gate just as he was entering. Lucien would have passed in, close to his horse's foot, but the sentries stopped him, and pushed him rudely back.

"Let me pass," cried Lucien, in a haughty tone: "I want to see the emperor, and tha officer promised me that I should enter."

At these words the officer turned round on his horse, recognised Lucien, remembered his promise, smiled at the intrepid air with which the young stranger urged his right, and waving his hand to the sentries, he said,

"Let him pass—he follows me."

"Yes, Prince," replied the sentries, respectfully saluting; and Lucien found himself within the wide and straggling courtyard of the château, and close to the spot

where rested for the moment the greatest man on earth. No one was more susceptible than he to the inspiration excited by the contiguity of greatness. He had never before been in such fellowship, and he had never felt as he did then. The officer, or the prince, as Lucien preferred considering him, galloped on, and left him quite to himself. He looked round the large space, enclosed within a high wall, and he saw himself the only visible unmilitary thing. The château-terrace and steps were garnished with officers, warlike figures were seen moving to and fro inside the house, the court-yard was nearly filled by the dragoons who were cleaning their jaded horses, and every moment brought some fresh arrival from the town, of Gens-d'armes or soldiers, horse or foot. The sounds of martial music filled the air. Trumpets, bugles, and drums, from various quarters of the town and suburbs, kept up an incessant call on the garrison, to turn out from their beds and hasten to

their parades. Soon the clatter of the earlies of the cavalry was heard approaching, and the gates were thrown wide open for their admission. They came in, at the steady and accustomed pace of veterans, ever ready and never discomposed. The infantry soon followed, with their bands playing and eagles glittering; and, beyond the gates, were visible to our hero crowds of the astonished and admiring citizens, who had hurried on, in vain hopes of being admitted to witness the review and gaze on the emperor.

The enclosed space in front of the château was of considerable extent, and retained many of those appearances which formerly marked it as a garden and pleasure ground. The remains of a shrubbery covered it here and there. A decaying arbour, a clump of trees, a pedestal for some statue, and the ruins of like ornaments were still standing, and rendered it, Lucien thought, a place but little suited for the evolutions of between three and four thousand men,

who were now drawn up on parade. Directly in front of the château, and extending from it for about sixty or seventy yards, was a parterre laid out in the formal but imposing style of French gardening, and thickly covered with flowers and plants of costly and rare descriptions, placed in most careful order and looking rich and beautiful. While Lucien took these observations, aide-de-camps and adjutants were trotting busily about, giving orders and making arrangements. Suddenly all the pioneers from the different regiments came to the front, and, with saws, and pickaxes, and hatchets, commenced simultaneously the work of dilapidation. Every pedestal and arbour and clump of trees was quickly levelled with the ground. Carts and barrows were in immediate readiness to carry out the rubbish; and, in less time than it appeared possible to our hero to have conceived the change, the whole of the space beyond the parterre presented a clear unbroken surface. The parterre, however, was

spared from these destructive changes, and it looked more smiling and graceful from the contrast with the desolation beyond it.

During these operations Lucien observed a group of officers on the terrace in front of the château. He approached them as closely as he could, and was not long in distinguishing the figure of Napoleon. A thrill of indescribable delight and awe rushed through him, as he gazed on this mighty monarch, the creator and destroyer of kings. His simple dress—his unaffected mien—his profound and penetrating look, were all remarked by Lucien, as we gaze on the mysterious phenomena of Nature, and tremble while we admire. The influence of the Emperor on all around him seemed quite magical. A look, a nod was sufficient for the prompt apprehensions of the obsequious courtiers; and they flew in different directions, to communicate orders they seemed intuitively to have guessed at.

Nothing appeared to escape Napoleon's eagle glance. It rested for a while on Lucien's unob-

trusive yet striking figure, and he turned suddenly round and said something to the officer next to him. It was he to whom Lucien had been indebted for the privilege he enjoyed; and a reply, as prompt as the observation, satisfied the Emperor, and turned his attention elsewhere.

A group of civilians, approaching in something like procession, now appeared. Napoleon saw what it was, and, with evident emotions of uneasiness and discontent, took two or three rapid turns on the terrace where he had been standing. He placed his hands crossed behind his back; and as he walked backwards and forwards, with his head bent and eyes cast down, the busy motion of his fingers told that he was conning something in his mind—of question or answer to the coming deputation. For it was the worthy citizens of Amiens who approached, represented by their magistrates and council. Nothing could have brought out into better relief the military promptitude and vigour

of the scene, than this decrepid specimen of civil display. As the straggling members of the deputation concentrated themselves, and prepared to encounter the appalling presence of him they came to idolize, the individual exhibitions of perturbation and preparation were irresistibly ludicrous. While they all endeavoured to rub the sleep from their eyes, and the cold from their hands, one worthy burgher took off the large coat which had wrapped him from the morning air, and flung it on the ground; another disburthened his head of the black silk night-cap which had covered it; a third unbuttoned the woollen gaiters that had hitherto hid the display of his spindle shanks, decked in a pair of dirty white silk stockings. The spokesman carefully read over and over the paper containing his address, and his teeth chattered from fright even at this rehearsal. At length, however, they all moved forwards in couples, with bare heads, and almost prostrate bodies. Napoleon turned round and stood calmly, ready to

receive them; took two or three pinches of snuff, and bowed with the politic shew of politeness, while the overpowered magistrate began his oration.

It consisted of the usual verbiage of which these fulsome things are formed. It was scarcely audible, from the trepidation of the orator. Napoleon listened with impatience, and when the magistrate made a short pause to recover breath, he took advantage of the moment, feigned to believe the address concluded, and spoke a few sentences of reply rapidly yet distinctly. Lucien caught some of the words. They referred to the war on which he was just then entering to decide the destinies of Europe; and the concluding expressions being uttered in a more positive and peremptory tone, were not to be mistaken.

"It is men I require, Monsieur the mayor —men, not manufactories. I want your citizens to become soldiers. The towns that send me the most and the best, are those which may

expect my favour and protection. See to it, gentlemen; the conscription is at hand—the army is on the path to glory!"

With these words he gave some sign, perceptible to those who watched his every look; and in an instant his charger was led to the steps of the terrace, the discomfited deputation being forced to break away as best they might, and save themselves from the curvettings of the proud animal.

Without further notice of the citizens, the emperor mounted his horse; and, once in the saddle, the docile beast was as calm and temperate as though conscious that it bore the master of half the civilized world.

And now the review commenced. As soon as the emperor was mounted, the word was passed for the formation of the troops into column, and then the different evolutions began. The personal staff of Napoleon were in a few minutes on horseback, and close beside their chief. He stood out a little in front, only dis-

tinguished from them by the plainness of his dress, and the singular power of his look and appearance. Lucien gazed on him with fascinated eyes, and felt that he could willingly lay down his life that moment, to attract one approving glance from the mighty conqueror. As the troops began to move, and perform their various manœuvres on the ground that had been cleared for them, the countenance of Napoleon, which had till then displayed the gravity of command rather than its energy, began gradually to lighten up with a brighter expression. The muscles of his face came into active play, his eyes became enlarged, a smile of peculiar sweetness spread over his lips, his sallow cheeks began to glow, and the enthusiasm of the warrior dissolved the callousness of the king. As the infantry marched and wheeled, performing its evolutions with perfect skill, he was evidently moved to absolute delight. Frequent approving gestures encouraged them. He took snuff, in quantities that proved the act of doing

so the mere force of habit during his pleased abstraction. As the three regiments marched past him, he gave them ample reason to be satisfied with themselves and him. He loudly praised them to the generals around him, and they filed away in evident enthusiasm about their great chieftain. Napoleon on this occasion, while reviewing this (comparatively) handful of soldiers, proved himself truly a man of genius; for genius alone can enter into the consideration of trifles, and clothe them with the consequence of mighty matters and events. It is imagination, the grand attribute of genius, that supplies the deficiency, and brings to the highest level of importance that which, with common minds, would ever retain its littleness.

But it was when the six squadrons of dragoons began to move, that Napoleon really felt the inspiration of the scene. The infantry had filed off through the gate, and the distant sounds of their music, were gradually dying away, when a flourish of trumpets announced the cavalry

manœuvres. The clatter of the horses and their harnessed riders, as they filed and wheeled about, stirred up each beholder's blood, and the emperor's not the least. Several charges took place at his orders, superbly executed, but in a space too confined to allow of their full effect. Napoleon ordered the whole to retreat to the very extremity of the court yard, and he himself hastily retired from the place he had occupied in front of the parterre. He now almost touched the terrace of the château, and when the squadrons had wheeled round, and faced him, he commanded in his own person another charge. Like lightning the word was obeyed, down clattered the whole line, the full length of the court, and as they touched on the parterre all seemed to expect the word to halt. The officers of the staff looked at the emperor in anxious hope that he would speak—but his mind was far abroad, not prisoned to a flower plat. He gave no word, the squadrons came on; in a moment the whole treasures of the parterre,

were trampled into atoms, rooted up, annihilated. Several horses stumbled over the shrubs and flower pots, and fell—Napoleon heeded them not—nor ever gave the looked for word, till the foremost line almost touched his horse's head. Pursuant to his command, in an instant they halted, and wheeled round again; and another retreating charge completed the destruction of the doomed parterre, and ended the martial display.

Several of the dismounted troopers recovered their seats and rode back to rejoin their troops. Two were unable to move; and some of the attendant observers raised them from the ground, and bore them away. One had a leg broken, the other a skull fractured; and the pale faces of both, were turned full upon Napoleon, as he spoke loudly to their more fortunate comrades.

"Soldiers, I am well pleased with you to-day. To-morrow shall see your reward. You march at dawn to join the grand army."

"Long live the Emperor! Long live Napoleon the great," was shouted by every voice. Even the poor wounded wretches on the earth beneath him, feebly joined in the sound. But these exclamations fell dull and damp upon Napoleon's ear. The delusion of the scene was gone. The world he had created, had vanished with the breath of man's applause. He recognized the reality of the narrow sphere he moved in. Scorn of the insufficient space took place of his high wrought energy; his countenance lost its brightness, it became at once dull, dignified, and gloomy; he cast a cold and careless look upon the wounded sufferers beneath him, dismounted from his horse, and walked hastily into the château.

Lucien, who had observed him closely, stood transfixed to the spot. He was carried away into forgetfulness of all, but the contemplation of the wonderful being who had filled his eyes. He saw the wounded soldiers carried off, the carriages with fresh horses brought to the door,

and the emperor and his immediate followers enter them, while the rest mounted their horses, and all rapidly dashed off, without deigning a visit to the town. It was the garrison only that he cared for.

All the beholders of the scene with the exception of Lucien, had followed the cavalcade. While our hero stood alone and thoughtful, he was aroused from his reverie by a voice of wailing, and looking round him, he saw sitting on the terrace steps, an old grey headed man, with eyes fixed on the desolated parterre, wringing his hands in anguish, and loudly venting his feelings. It was the old gardener of the château, who had thus witnessed in an hour, the destruction of half a century of care, of labour, and of pride.

"Curse on the conqueror! Death to the destroyer," cried he: "callous to all but his own greatness, men are his slaves, and nature itself his byword of contempt. He cares not what hearts he wrings with grief, what regions he lays desolate. Why should I then wonder

at his wanton waste? He goes now to finish the conquest of the world—to devastate whole realms, as he has ruined this garden. But the day may come, when not one shrub shall shadow the destroyer's grave!"

Lucien turned away, walked to his inn, got his horse, and sauntered home; the scene of the morning, and the old man's anathema filling his brain and ringing in his ears.

CHAPTER X.

THE transaction just described took place in the latter end of April 1812. Napoleon, big with his vast designs, was then on the point of leaving France, to put himself at the head of the combined forces with which he was about to open his crusade against the north. Previous to his departure, he had made several rapid and almost secret journeys into different parts of the kingdom, inspecting fortresses, reviewing depôts, and taking garrisons by surprise. He had thus with his own eyes seen the state of things in almost every important quarter, and formed his judgment, on personal observation, of the condition and disposition of the troops he was about

to leave behind him. He had made a hasty visit to some of the strong places on the northern frontier, and in the Netherlands; and returning to Paris, he had suddenly left the direct road, and, totally unexpected, he appeared, as we have seen, at Amiens.

Napoleon mortally hated on these occasions the pompous parade of corporation loyalty, and, above all things, the fustian eloquence in which the addresses were written and spoken. To avoid as much as could be escaped from of these solemnities, he often took up his residence at some house in the suburbs of the town, and declined to occupy the official mansions of the mayors or prefects; and, as had just taken place, he most frequently avoided even entering the town at all, making the municipal authorities come to him to his country quarters, and cutting as short as possible the measure of their servile eulogy. The château which he had this time chosen for his halting place at Amiens, was the property of one of those emigrants who had

refused to return to France, notwithstanding all the encouragement held out in the imperial promises, and against whom a positive decree of banishment was afterwards issued for contempt of it. Napoleon did not of course hold these recusants in great good will; and he thought nothing of the passing inconvenience, or permanent annoyance occasioned by his three hours sojourn, in the present instance, at the uninhabited house of a man who despised his inducements or detested his rule. The officer of his household, on whom depended the providing of proper quarters on the Emperor's flying excursions, knew well the particular situation of every habitation likely to suit his purposes, near most of the principal towns, and this, like the others, had been noted down as the one most fit for his reception. It was kept in good order, scantily, but sufficiently furnished, and a few servants retained, at the expense, for many years, of the absent proprietor; and the garden and shrubberies, where his happiest hours of childhood had

been spent, were preserved at considerable cost, in the order in which the emperor *found* them. His act of destruction was not by any means premeditated. The clearing away the remains of the shrubbery he did not stop to consider as worth a thought; but the wanton ravage of the *parterre* was, as it has been described, the effect of a sudden and uncontroulable impulse. When done he experienced not the least regret. The feelings of the obstinate absentee were of perfect indifference to him; but his keen sense of justice made him order, before he left the place, an ample equivalent for the damage to be charged on his private purse—and he commanded a pension of several hundred francs to be settled on the old gardener, whose sorrow did not escape his penetrating eye, though it made but faint impression on his heart.

These points adjusted, and his hasty breakfast dispatched, he proceeded rapidly on his way to the capital, to take his final measures of departure; having long planned the whole of that

stupendous undertaking, which was destined, like the pyramids of the Egyptian kings, to be but an unwieldy record of perishing power and vain ambition.

And while the imperial traveller hurried on with all the speed which his horses could put forth, our hero returned homewards at his animal's easiest pace, with his mind as full of plans and projects (and all of as mighty import to himself) as was that of the great conqueror for whom the world was too small.

Lucien was received by Valerie and his father with more than a common welcome, for they (need I say *she* in particular?) were somewhat uneasy at the unusual circumstance of his having been absent all night. They were, however, relieved from all anxiety, by ascertaining that he was safe and well; and Valerie soon observed in him an air of extraordinary buoyancy that seemed to elevate him above himself. She knew the peculiarities of his mind, and she was certain that some event of rare occurrence had given this

colouring to his manners. She did not, however, seek to force the revelation from him, but quietly, though anxiously, waited his own time.

Mr. Lacourtelle began his inquiries as to the result of Lucien's mission, with an uneasiness too evident to be trifled with. Lucien thought the best answer would be the production of the instrument which he had obtained from Bonnard, and by which the astonished father saw that he had a whole year's respite for payment, and that his debt was reduced to less than half the sum for which he believed himself to be involved. He pressed Lucien for a detail of the means by which he had effected these unexpected conditions, and Lucien gave a brief, but graphic sketch of his interview with the notary, and made a full confession of the part he himself had acted, and of the varied sensations which had accompanied his conduct from first to last. He then narrated the circumstances of *his interview* with the emperor; and being on this subject even

more animated than on the former, he produced on his listeners a vivid impression of the scene, and of all that passed in his own mind in connection with it; and from the oft-repeated description of this, his father and other friends had it as much by heart (though by no means as much *at* heart) as he had, and from their accounts at second hand, I have been enabled to retail it, as I have done in the last two chapters.

From the day of Lucien's return home a week or more passed by, spent by him in a state of mingled ferment and constraint. Deeply and devotedly as he loved Valerie, he felt that he *must* leave her. Fate seemed to have decided the necessity of military service as a part of his existence. He could not conceal from himself that peace, fortune, love, all combined, could have no permanent charms for him, while the canker of ungratified ambition was gnawing at his heart. His passion for a military life might perhaps have been stifled amidst the tranquil

joys of home and happiness, had not the memorable scene at Amiens, and the fascination of Napoleon's fame, called it too powerfully into action to make its suppression possible. Feeling but a source of self torment in efforts to extinguish this his ruling passion, he at length resolved to let it run its course unobstructed; and the only lingering pain he experienced in so doing, was from the difficulty of concealing from Valerie, or the still greater one of confessing to her feelings and intentions which must soon, very soon, cause her so much misery.

But a part of this disquietude he might have spared himself. Attempted concealment from her, was unnecessary and fruitless. She knew all that he had to acknowledge. From the day of his return from Amiens, it was impossible to deceive her. His animated description of the emperor, of *the prince* he had conversed with, of the scene he had witnessed, were indications, as strong as fact itself, to the eager watchfulness of Valerie's mind that Lucien was about to leave

her. When, or how he meant to effect his resolution to become a soldier, she knew not, nor had he indeed decided, when a most unlooked for arrival, and its consequences, gave him the wished for opportunity.

One day as the family party were sitting at their frugal dinner, not expecting, nor prepared for a visitor, a gentleman appeared at the outer door; and before Mr. Lacourtelle had time to go out of the room, to receive him with the courtesy due to a stranger, he walked in with an air of mixed politeness and familiarity. He bowed to Valerie with a marked expression of respect, more slightly to Lucien; and stretching his hand towards Mr. Lacourtelle, claimed *his*, for his old acquaintance, Isambert Duflos.

It was hard to tell which of the party was most surprised. Lucien and Valerie both reddened deeply—from different feelings however. Mr. Lacourtelle stared at Isambert, while he grasped his hand firmly, and looked at him long before he was quite convinced of his identity.

His appearance was much changed and infinitely improved. He had grown into the height and full proportions of manhood, and was now in figure as nearly as possible the same as Lucien. He was by no means so handsome, but he had acquired an air of military firmness that was more marked and decided than his. He was better dressed too, than on the day of his former visit, and was altogether superior in appearance to what Valerie remembered of him on that occasion. His manners were quite unchanged, frank and careless in their general tone, but particularly decided and impressive when he wished to give strength to any observation that fell from him.

After the warm welcome of Mr. Lacourtelle, the forced civility of Lucien, and the courteous salutation of Valerie were duly acknowledged, and Isambert had taken his place at table, he hastened to explain the circumstances which had so soon terminated his military career, and brought him back to France. In lightly touch

ing the details of his services in Spain, where he had been sent direct from Flixecourt with the batch of his fellow conscripts, he did not quite suppress the circumstances which had gained him such honourable mention in the public despatches. From the peculiar good luck which follows some men in their military career, he had been enabled to afford, on the very day that gained him admission to the Legion of Honour, protection and safety to the family of a rich and grateful Spanish grandee, who insisted on his receiving as his right, but still insufficient reward, a portion of the valuable property which his bravery and generosity had preserved. This gift of a portion of what was his own, had he preferred the laws of war to the dictates of integrity, was presented to him in valuable diamonds, as being more portable, and more easily transferred to cash than any other kind of securities.—Isambert safely preserved the diamonds until an opportunity offered of disposing of them, in one of the great towns to which his

regiment was soon removed; and having procured the best price he could, which was far below their value, he transmitted the bills to old Bonnard at Amiens, by whose means it was that he had known of Mr. Lacourtelle's want of a substitute for his son, and through whom the whole arrangement had been made. Isambert wrote to the old notary ample directions for the disposal of his remittance, desiring in the first place, a certain portion to be immediately handed to his father, and next, that the outstanding claim against Mr. Lacourtelle should be instantly bought up in his name, and that gentleman allowed his own time for the payment. The notary performed the latter part of his orders, with a slight exception or two; he totally suppressed all mention of Isambert's name in the purchase, calculating upon the great probabilities that he would never return; he bought up the bonds *in his own name*, by a private agreement with the original lender of the money, by which he secured a large allowance to himself in con-

sideration of prompt payment, and he took steps to pursue Mr. Lacourtelle for the whole, with all the vengeful rigours of the law.

Mr. Lacourtelle's gratitude to Isambert and Lucien's indignation against Bonnard prompted frequent interruption at this part of the narrative; both being anxious to relate to Isambert the particulars of Lucien's interview with the legal villain. But Isambert stopped them short, by assuring them that he was acquainted with the whole affair; and he proceeded to state, that subsequently to the good fortune which he had already mentioned, he had had the still greater of actually saving the life of his general, one of the most distinguished marshals of France, who, in his unbounded gratitude, offered every thing to his preserver that his influence could procure. Promotion was the first thing that occurred to the marshal—but it happened to be the very last that suited Isambert. He had done his duty, as has been seen, with distinguished zeal; had gained the applause and admiration of all

ranks for his exemplary conduct and courage; but he hated the life of a soldier. He hated the scenes of blood, the reckless waste of time, the total dissipation of mind, and the abounding profligacy which were too much the avoidless characteristics of the profession. He, therefore, to the astonishment of the marshal and all his companions, (but he could not forfeit their esteem), requested, as the reward most congenial to his desires, an immediate discharge from the service; and asked another private favour, which it would be premature to mention here. The first request was, after remonstrance and almost reproach had been exhausted, granted to him; and thus, at the expiration of two years he found himself released from his engagement, which had bound him to serve for five; and without one day's delay he hurried back to France, and arrived at his father's house in the neighbourhood of Amiens, as soon as a letter could have travelled to announce his coming.

"My first visit," said Isambert, concluding

his recital, "was, as you will suppose, to my parents—for I have both father and mother still living—and to my great delight I found them well, and to *theirs* I convinced them that I was so too, after all my perils. It was yesterday morning that I reached home. In the afternoon, I visited our common friend old Bonnard. Since the day that Mr. Lucien Lacourtelle caught him napping he has not had such a fright, depend upon it, as my appearance caused him. The devil himself could not have surprised him so much. Our interview was a long one, but it ended well. The old wretch acknowledged his niquity, detailed all that passed with you, refunded me the money which I had transmitted him, and the first use I made of part of it was to pay off the six thousand francs you owed him, and here, I have the pleasure to present you your bond, with a full acquittal for principal and interest."

"And now," continued he, seeing that both father and son were preparing to speak their

thanks, and that Valerie was most eloquently uttering hers through the medium of her bright yet brimful eyes, "and now, that we may quite comprehend the footing on which we stand, and to prevent your mis-conceiving it for a moment, let me tell you that it was not my money that redeemed this bond, but *yours*. You know that you paid me ten thousand francs for my promised service for five years, for which period you conceived your son to be released from all conscription claims. So did I; and when I got my discharge from the army at the end of two years, I thought that in strict justice the exemption granted to me for life should have extended to him that I represented. So in justice it should, but you know that law and justice are not quite the same; and I found yesterday on making the inquiry at Amiens that the favour granted to me was merely personal; that Lucien Lacourtelle is as liable as ever to serve as a soldier; and that he may be drawn again for the conscription at the Mairie of Flixecourt to-mor-

row. That being the case, I was clearly bound to refund you the proportion of the money you paid me equivalent to three years' service; it amounted to six thousand francs exactly, and I thought the best and most pleasing way to you to receive it would be in the redemption of your bond. I therefore"——but he suddenly stopped, on perceiving that Valerie turned pale, rose hastily, and quitted the room.

This circumstance spoke her secret only to him who knew it before. Isambert attached no meaning of its true nature to this change of colour, and Mr. Lacourtelle was too much interested in the conversation to give any thing else his minute attention. Valerie therefore escaped undiscovered, though not unobserved; and ill as she felt herself, she could not fail to remark the strong emotion visible on Isambert's countenance, at the betrayal of hers. Lucien followed her from the room, to cheer her with such comforting assurances as he could give; but a new pang had been added to the certainty that he

wished to go as a soldier, by the knowledge that he was liable to be forced away.

During the time that Lucien and Valerie were absent from the room, Mr. Lacourtelle had communicated to Isambert, for whom his former liking had justly increased ten-fold, much of the circumstances of the last two years. He particularly told of the arrival of the De Villeforte family, of Henriette's evident attachment to his son, and he confessed that he had given a full account of it to Bonnard while inducing him to withhold his demands, in the notion that Lucien's marriage to the romantic beauty would have soon enabled him to clear off the incumbrance of that debt. Mr. Lacourtelle, in his cordial confidence, and cheered by a more than usual portion of wine, acknowledged to Isambert that his next wish after seeing Lucien married was to find a fitting husband for Valerie, and he so broadly hinted his wish that Isambert himself might prove the man, that the

latter could not affect to himself a want of consciousness as to the extent of those wishes.

On Valerie's return to the dining-room, she replied to her uncle's inquiries for Lucien, that he had gone for a short time to Flixecourt, and she apologized in his name to Isambert, who readily pardoned an absence of which she spoke the excuse. Isambert's conversation with Mr. Lacourtelle had given to his manner that kind of thoughtful animation which is so distinct from the every-day gaiety of little minds. Although his words did not come from him exactly as if they were either weighed or measured, they spoke a meaning of solid enjoyment, as unlike to levity as it was to gloom. He talked to Valerie in a strain of mixed amusement and instruction, at least what Valerie felt she ought to have acknowledged as such, and that at another time she most undoubtedly would. But with the horrible thought before her of Lucien's being drawn again for a conscript, amusement nor instruction had no

existence for her. Isambert talked on without appearing to be affected by her want of attention. In fact, he was so occupied in the thoughts excited by Mr. Lacourtelle's discourse, and in the flow of spirits arising from it, that he overlooked Valerie's abstraction and his own inability to remove it. At length, to his infinite annoyance and Valerie's relief, and to the as great delight of Mr. Lacourtelle, Henriette de Villeforte made her appearance, to pay her usual afternoon visit. She had walked from the château alone, and she came in with that peculiar air of easy cordiality, which is so irresistibly attractive when the heart is evidently its inspiration. Her face wore its brightest glow of health and animation, and the elegance of her manners completed the combination of all that was required to make a very striking impression at first sight.

Henriette's first impulse was to cast an inquiring glance around the room, which, not containing the object of her search, held nothing

of any great interest to her. She was, notwithstanding, as fond of Valerie as she could be of any one that was not *the* one paramount mark of attachment. She had a great respect also for Mr. Lacourtelle, and she liked to regard both him and Valerie with those feelings of kindred, in which something told her she would one day have a right to view them. She had never had the remotest notion that the attachment which she saw between Valerie and Lucien was more than what might exist between brother and sister. And I may here mention that Valerie, though well aware of the nature of Henriette's feelings towards Lucien, knew nothing of that petty jealousy which is falsely supposed to be the test of woman's love, and which turns all her feelings into gall, because another can admire the object of her affection. This sort of jealousy arises from selfishness not love; for *that* delights in seeing the beloved one the attraction round which the innoxious brilliancy of beauty and grace may sport, as

lightning plays round the magnetic rod it illumines but cannot consume. Valerie put her whole trust in Lucien's faith, and while sure of him she had no fear from others.

The effect produced on Isambert by Henriette's manner was pleasing, so much so that he recovered from the discontent which her interruption at first caused, and he listened to the animated flow of her conversation, rather amused by the absent air which accompanied all she said, while her self-betraying glances were perpetually turned towards the window which commanded a view of Flixecourt. To her great relief, and to Valerie's evident joy, Lucien at length made his appearance; but he seemed ill at ease. His whole manner evinced a struggle of powerful feelings, which none of the party were able completely to understand—but Valerie, and she alone, feared that she conjectured rightly as to its cause.

Lucien received all the marked attentions of Henriette with a composed indifference, except

on two or three occasions, when a momentary feeling of gratified vanity prompted him to let Isambert see the emotion he had the power to excite. And even these partial returns which he made to her kind looks and words, seemed to satisfy Henriette, whose imagination easily filled up the long intervals of his abstraction, by the supposed workings of timidity, delicacy and dread—which she firmly reckoned on as the sole preventives to Lucien's full and formal declaration of an attachment, of which she never doubted the existence.

The closing in of evening gave its warning for Henriette's departure. The whole party rose to accompany her on her way towards home; but after walking all together for awhile in the direction of the chateâu, Lucien contrived to detach Mr. Lacourtelle from the rest, and making an apology to Henriette, they left her and Valerie in Isambert's care; and father and son sauntered off on another path. As soon as they were out of hearing of the others, Lucien said,

"Well now, my dear father, every thing promises you prosperity and peace. This Isambert has certainly acted nobly by us, and you see yourself, thank Heaven, free from all the trouble I have caused you for two years past."

"Yes, my boy, Isambert has indeed fully proved himself what my first impression told me he was: all now looks well, and but one or two things are wanting to complete the happiness of us all. I think I know what you have taken me aside for? Do I guess rightly? Come, come, I'll relieve your embarrassments—you want to speak to me about Mademoiselle de Villeforte?"

"Mademoiselle de Villeforte! No, indeed, father, I do not.

"Yes you do—there is no use in denying it—but I will spare all your confusion—I take it all upon himself. It is a brilliant thing, my boy—and to-morrow morning I will wait upon her aristocratical old father, and rouse the thick blood in his noble veins, by proposing such a

son-in-law as none of his feudal progenitors ever had. Leave it all to me—Henriette will have an independent fortune, and a fine one, you dog, at her mother's death—I'll warrant you I shall get over their scruples, if any exist. You shall have her—never fear—I promise her to you."

"My dear father, you quite mistake me—I swear to you you do. You forget the conscription—that I am again liable—"

"A fig for the conscription! What even if you were drawn? Old De Villeforte shall buy you off at any price."

"De Villeforte! What in God's name have I, can I have to do with him? You are labouring under a dreadful delusion, my dear father—the shock you will receive by and bye will open your eyes to the fact."

"Shock! What do you call a shock? You think he'll refuse me? He'll not dare to do that, Lucien. My father made *his* fly before now, in fear and trembling—and he will not venture to rouse my blood, depend on it. He knows the

Lacourtelles, as well he may! So now, Lucien, leave all to me. Say nothing more to me now—I have put myself in a passion with this aristocrat already, but I shall be with him to-morrow."

Lucien, finding it vain to oppose for the time his father's obstinate error, left him at length and went off in search of Valerie. He met her and Isambert returning to the house, where Mr. Lacourtelle soon appeared; and after some few words of commonplace conversation, Lucien contrived again to escape from the presence of his father and their visitor; and Valerie following his signal, they were once more together, unobserved and unheard by all the world.

But how different was their brief and anguished interview, from those delicious hours of stolen intercourse which had shortened and brightened every day for the last two years! Lucien had made up his mind, in desperation, to communicate to Valerie before hand, the intelligence which the morrow was to proclaim to all. She,

on her part, too clearly anticipated the disclosure he was about to make. She had known him too long—had watched him too well, to hesitate in her conviction of the course he was so decided on taking. The whole tenor of his conversation and conduct, from the day of his return from Amiens, had impressed her with the certainty of his intended voluntary service as a soldier: and when she heard Isambert that day pronounce his liability to be drawn, and saw the flush of animation which the statement caused on Lucien's brow, her heart sunk within her, and drew with it, as we have seen, every drop of the blood that mantled in her cheeks. Still, although Valerie could feel the very depths of emotion, she had a fund of strength of mind that rarely failed her. She had good sense, as well as strong feeling; and she possessed, besides, a fine quality of pride, that told her what was due to herself in all the varying accidents of life. She could not consent to be an unsuccessful suppliant for mercy, even at the feet of

Lucien, and she felt that it would be almost as degrading to her to use that last resource of womanly persuasion, to make him change a resolution on which his present peace and her own chance of future happiness depended. She saw clearly, that were he now induced to abandon his design, it would be the creation of utter misery to him, from which would spring, perhaps, contempt and aversion to her who would have been its cause. Under the influence, then, of all these reasonings, she was prepared to hear, and to support as best she might, the avowal which trembled on Lucien's quivering lip.

Valerie in the midst of her own wretchedness strove to lessen his agitation and embarrassment, and she led to, rather than avoided his confession, that when he parted from her that evening he went to the Greffier at Flixecourt, who had the management of the lots for the drawing to take place the next day, and that, by a particular manner of rolling the papers to be placed

in the vase, Lucien was to be aware of those which ensured the fate of the drawers. He had adopted the usual means employed, in persuading the underlings of office to induce the Greffier to make this arrangement, and the latter satisfied his conscience for the act of connivance, by the consideration that he was thus instrumental in gaining for the emperor's service the finest lad in the commune.

Valerie summoned all her fortitude to listen to this decisive detail. She now saw that no rational hope was left for her; and with an energy, which might almost be called heroism, she immediately began to repeat the preparations for her lover's departure, which two years before she had made with a hand less firm even than now. For her affliction in the first instance was even greater than the present, her nerves being then not strung by the certainty of her lover's tried attachment, which now seemed to brace her spirits and counteract the workings of despair. Valerie retired to her own chamber,

and Lucien returned to the sitting room where supper was prepared. The woman-servant soon brought an excuse for Valerie's non-appearance and Lucien early withdrew, leaving his father and Isambert to the discussion of their repast, and the various topics of public and private interest which arose from its inspirations. Long after both had retired to their beds, Lucien and Valerie continued their sad employment and more sad discourse; both borne up, by their several exciting feelings, against the misfortune of a separation, which they aknowledged to be inevitable.

CHAPTER XI.

The drawing for the conscription was fixed for an early hour the following morning, and Lucien attended punctually at the Mairie. As soon as his turn for drawing came, he put in his hand with a quiet certainty of the result, but with none of the haughty impatience which so distinguished him on the former occasion. He pulled forth the lot—it was examined and proclaimed—Lucien was announced a second time a conscript—passed hastily through the hands of the junta within—and, while he calmly but resolutely walked through the village, he sent forward a swift messenger to announce to his father that he was decidedly a soldier.

Mr. Lacourtelle and Isambert were at breakfast, when the messenger arrived. Valerie could not venture to appear. The man announced his intelligence abruptly at the open window, and no sooner did Mr. Lacourtelle understand it fully, than he commenced his preparations for hastening his visit to the Château de Villeforte. He seemed to have expected this result, and he reckoned on the certainty of his own and Henriette's influence with her father being undoubtedly strong enough to obtain his purpose. Isambert, who two years before had witnessed Mr. Lacourtelle's suffering in the dread of losing his son, could not now help moralizing on the variability of the human mind, when he saw this father on the very point of enduring the certainty of the evil he had before had the means of averting, and confiding in a most improbable contingency, his only chance for escape, without an apparent symptom of uneasiness. But this instance was but a proof of the too common readiness with

which men cling to the faint hopes of aid from others, on points which, when dependant on their own exertions, they almost despair of.

Mr. Lacourtelle hastily buttoned on his short cotton gaiters, fixed his hat firmly on his head, took his stick in his hand, and thus plainly equipped, and winding up his contemptuous dislike of the aristocrat to its highest pitch, he set off on the proposed visit, which was to terminate in a demand for his daughter's hand, and an immediate sum of money to buy off Lucien's service.

About an hour before this departure, a scene occurred at the Château de Villeforte, which, by a curious coincidence, had decided its haughty possessor to set off to pay a visit, but of a very different nature, to Mr. Lacourtelle. Scarcely had Mr. de Villeforte sallied forth from his dressing room that morning, and taken his early cup of coffee, in the large and half furnished saloon, when he was surprised and somewhat alarmed, at the abrupt entrance of his daughter

Henriette. Her hair was dishevelled, her eyes filled with tears, her dress disordered, and her whole air and appearance, something between that of a maniac and a tragedy queen. Her father was accustomed to her romantic flights, but he thought there was more of reality in her present distress, than he had ever before observed, and he anxiously moved towards her with open arms and inquiring looks. Henriette flung herself on her knees at his feet; such a proceeding being in all affairs of the kind, what a gambler would call a *jeu de regle*, and for several minutes she vainly attempted to utter something, through a host of obstructing sobs and sighs and other convulsions.

I may take advantage of her situation, to explain to the reader, what she found it so hard to tell her father. It was simply that she had just heard of Lucien's being present at the Mairie at Flixecourt, to answer the call upon his name, and of his liability to serve as a conscript. She acquired this information from one of the

servants, who had come up to the château with frequent bulletins of the progress of the drawing, some anxiety having been either felt or assumed by the family, particularly the young ladies, on account of Camille de Villeforte, whose name was also on the list, but who ran little risk, as his mother had a purse of several thousand francs ready to pay for the immediate purchase of a substitute, in case that one of the lots should fall upon her darling son. Henriette had often heard the story of Isambert's connection with the Lacourtelles, and knew that it was he whom she had seen the previous evening at their house. But Valerie had held back the painful information of Lucien's liability, caused by Isambert's return, and her own suspicions of his determination to become a soldier. She knew the state of Henriette's heart, and neither wished to inflict on her any of the pain she herself experienced, (the ordinary relief to a selfish mind) nor would she risk the exposure of her friend's wild and unregulated feelings before a stranger. The

news of the following morning broke upon Henriette, therefore, with all the becoming agonies of a romantic denouement; and she ran as we have seen her, to her father's feet—having first taken due care to disencumber her beautiful brown tresses of the unagitating accessories of combs and papillotes.

"What on earth is the matter with you, Henriette," asked Mr. de Villeforte, assuming an indifference, which was foreign to what he felt. "What new boon have you to ask? Has your pet rabbit done some mischief in the garden, or your cat broken a china cup? Come, come, tell me your misfortune—your pardon is granted before hand."

"Oh, my dear father," cried she, in half articulate tones, with *real* tears streaming down her cheeks, "do not act like those flinty hearted parents, who doom their offspring to perpetual woe—take pity on me!

"Now really, Henriette, this is going too far. Get up, like a good girl, and wipe your eyes."

"Wipe my eyes! Oh, Heavens, is it thus a father can speak to his heart-breaking child? Wipe my eyes! Is that the only comfort in my affliction? Is that the only balm for the despair which has seized not only upon me, but which at this moment consumes *him*, who is my world—my all—myself."

"Him! Who! What do you mean?" quickly demanded the father, fancying that he at length saw some cause of danger, where he at first only suspected mere trifling. "Explain yourself instantly, Henriette. I command you to tell me what you mean by this rhapsody."

"Rhapsody!" echoed she; "and is it thus the throes of the heart's suffering are called? Thus the excruciated utterance of agony is reviled? Rhapsody! Oh! cruel, cruel father!"

"In the name of Heaven, Henriette, I implore you to have a moment's common sense!"

"Common sense!"

"Nay, don't interrupt me, girl! Tell me what you want—what has happened to you—who is

implicated in this extravagance of yours? Answer me these questions, and I'll do what I can for you?"

"You will? You will? You do already relent? The tears of love have then thawed the ice of paternal rigour? And you will save him and me? There is no time to be lost—at this moment the drawing may be over—the fatal lots assigned. He may now, even now, be a conscript!"

"What then, you foolish girl, is this all? And what if he is a conscript? I'll buy him off, cost what it will."

"Oh, noble, generous, princely father! you will then save him to me, and me to him!" and with these words Henriette embraced the old man's knees, and squeezed his legs so tightly in her impassioned pressure, that he tottered and nearly fell. I think it is unnecessary to say, that while Henriette's feelings and observations, and pleadings, had Lucien for their object, her father's perception had only pointed to his

own son Camille, as the cause of her solicitude; and he, getting tired of her unnecessary heroics to save her brother from a merely imaginary danger, was determined to put an end to the scene.

"Let me go, you foolish girl," cried he, pettishly; "you will pull me down on the floor. What nonsense is all this? It is carrying your usual absurdity too far, Henriette. You know well that I never would have suffered your brother to go for a common conscript."

"My brother! my brother!" exclaimed Henriette, starting up, pushing her hair off her face, and taking a slanting glance at the large mouldy mirror beside her; "and is it, is it for the simple instinct of sisterly regard, that you have mistaken the mystic fermentations of love, which have come glooming and bubbling up from the soul's deep caverns? Have the dark wings of destiny been flapping before your eyes, to blind you to my desperation, and shut out the real object of my devotion? Have you in the mists of

wilful ignorance seen the form of Camille de Villeforte for that of Lucien Lacourtelle? Oh, Lucien, Lucien, Lucien!" and here she flung herself upon an old faded flesh-coloured satin sofa, in a very becoming attitude, and left one of her eyes sufficiently uncovered to allow her to distinguish the effect produced on her father.

If the black wings and the mists alluded to by Henriette, had really hovered round Mr. De Villeforte, her last exclamation completely dissipated them, and he saw, with the keen eye of an astronomer, into the whole system of planetary influences under which his daughter had been acting. The truth flashed upon him in a moment; and, with a passing curse upon his own folly, in having sanctioned the intimacy with the Lacourtelles, none of whom he had yet seen, he took the instant resolution of paying an immediate visit to the head of that family, to command his interference, or purchase his consent, for the prevention of further mis-

chief; and to take measures for Lucien's prompt removal from the neighbourhood, should the conscription have unfortunately spared him.

He therefore rang the bell, requested the instant presence of the baroness, told her briefly and reproachfully the discovery *he* had made, consigned Henriette to her charge, and, retiring to his dressing-room, he called his old valet to assist in making his toilette, with such effect as he thought likely to produce a fitting sensation upon the democratical rustic whom he was going to honour by his visit.

The ready valet had made rapid way in the embellishment and equipment of his old master. He had put the broad gold buckles in his high-quartered shoes, had tightly drawn up and fastened at the knees, his blue and white striped silk stockings, had gone gradually upwards in the various articles of dress, fastened the stiff white stock round the neck, and was just giving a finishing frizzing to the left side

curls, when a footman announced the arrival of Mr. Lacourtelle, and his request for an immediate interview with Mr. de Villeforte, on business of the utmost importance.

This abrupt announcement threw Mr. de Villeforte somewhat off his centre. He, as most others, had a considerable dislike to be taken by surprise, and felt the usual inconveniences it occasions. He was quite at a loss how to act in this emergency. He had prepared the plan of his projected visit—what he was to say—how he was to look, to stand, to go—how to enter the house, and how come out; and to be cut off in this way from the whole effect of this display! Who would not pity poor Mr. de Villeforte? He never, however, doubted Mr. Lacourtelle's feeling and thinking on the main subject just as he did; he was certain his visit now was to anticipate his aristocratic wrath, by a renunciation of all hope on the part of his son, and most probably, to propose his receiving a pecuniary reward for giving up the thing; and he resolved

to assume an air of dignified protection to the suppliant father, and to spare *his* feelings, as much as was consistent with the dignity of the De Villefortes.

Having thrown his flowered silk dressing gown loosely round him, he returned to the drawing-room, and taking a chair by the fire side, he put on his best air of superannuated puppyism, and ordered the servant to shew Mr. Lacourtelle into the room. The latter, who rather impatiently paced the marble flagging of the vestibule, almost anticipated the servant's intimation that he might enter, and was inside the door of the drawing-room as soon as it was opened for him. He touched his hat as he brushed past the footman, and, without uncovering his head, he walked bolt into the middle of the room. Mr. de Villeforte, though somewhat startled, was courtier enough to seem unmoved by what would have ruffled a man of more nerve but less fashion. The start, for it was a start, with which he rose from his chair, received from his

ready air all the grace of a friendly advance; for the sturdy manner of his visitor made him instantaneously change his tactics, and instead of his former haughty preparation of countenance, he was now all smiles and cordiality. Mr. Lacourtelle did not expect this, neither did he doubt its sincerity; and his heart being a good deal softened by the situation of his son, he was, like many a trusting dupe, deceived by the serpent insincerity before him. As Mr. de Villeforte came up to him, bowing and smiling, Mr. Lacourtelle took off his hat, and sat down, as he was requested, on one of the old satin covered chairs, which felt to the rough republican exceedingly soft and ricketty.

As soon as he was seated, Mr. de Villeforte, who had drawn his chair beside him, began the discourse, by requesting, in very trim phraseology, to know to what good fortune he was indebted for the honour of receiving the visit of Mr. Lacourtelle.

"Why, as for that, Sir, I told your servant,

who no doubt informed you, that I came here on business of very serious importance; and it may be called important, Mr. de Villeforte, when it relates to the honour and happiness of two respectable families, one of which, at least, has served its country through all her glorious struggles for liberty—whose citizens have——"

"Softly, softly, my dear Sir," said Mr. de Villeforte, "I fancy the interests of our families do not now require a political discussion between us. Depend upon it, I feel convinced that you are disposed to do everything that becomes a man of integrity and moderation, in the rather delicate affair on which, if I mistake not, you are come here; for I think I do divine the motives of your visit."

"Then you might as well have said so at once, for there is nothing like plain, straight forward dealing in these cases, Mr. de Villeforte. The glorious revolution has taught us——"

"Pray do permit me, Mr. Lacourtelle, to keep you rather more to the point of our imme-

diate business. I dare say, now, it is this affair between Mademoiselle de Villeforte and your son, which has procured me this honour ?"

"So, so, then, your daughter has told you of her attachment to Lucien ?"

"Mademoiselle de Villeforte *has*—lately—just now, in fact, Sir, given me some reason to understand—that is, I should say, to suspect, that something may have imprudently passed——"

"Come, come, Mr. de Villeforte, it's very well to talk of imprudence at our age—but when I married my wife, and you first fell in with the old baroness——"

"Mr. Lacourtelle, those reminiscences are very foreign to the present question—the honour and the happiness of my daughter is now at stake, and it is that I must look to."

"I would not for the world that any thing *dishonourable* happened, Mr. de Villeforte, be assured of that—it was to prevent that that I came to you so promptly; for you know, when

the young blood is up there is no answering for consequences."

"Very true, I confess it, that even birth and station are not strong enough to prevent women of family from sometimes suffering themselves to yield to the undignified weaknesses of nature—therefore the sooner matters are brought to a final close the better for all parties. You will agree with me, Mr. Lacourtelle, I am sure—you will allow that I *have* some reason to be sore on this business, although your son may be, and no doubt is, as indeed I have heard, a very fine young fellow. But in a case of this kind, where there is such wide difference of rank, the sooner such a matter is concluded on the best terms the better—but there cannot be much difficulty, Mr. Lacourtelle, I should hope."

"Why, no, indeed, Mr. de Villeforte, not much, as the fortune is all on one side."

"A significant hint!" thought Mr. de Villeforte; and resuming the conversation, he said, "But then the object is to come to an arrange-

ment at once. You and I know the world and understand each other—there is no use in mincing matters—it must be an off-hand business—so pray tell me, what sum in fact do you suppose your son would be satisfied with?"

Mr. Lacourtelle was astonished at the promptitude with which he was met at all points. He had not expected so much frankness on the part of the proud aristocrat; but he took it for granted that Henriette's determination, as well as her independence, had silenced his objections, and he was determined not to be outdone in liberality. He therefore replied,

"I think, Sir, I may say safely on the part of Lucien, that he is above sordid considerations, and he will leave the money arrangements entirely to yourself and the young lady."

"Really, Mr. Lacourtelle," exclaimed Mr. de Villeforte, all his pride bristling up, "this is an indelicacy I scarcely expected from your opening observations. My daughter's honour could not allow her to be a party in such a com-

promise. To ensure her happiness, and the family honour, I will go any reasonable lengths, but I must repeat my question as to the sum which I ought in fairness to be expected to give."

"Well then, let us see," said Mr. Lacourtelle; "but before going one inch further, I must tell you that a great difficulty to an immediate settlement is my son's having been within the last hour, actually drawn for the conscription."

"Difficulty!" exclaimed the other, starting up, and rubbing his hands with joy, "Difficulty! Why, what does the man mean? A piece of unlooked for good news indeed!"

"I don't exactly understand this, Mr. de Villeforte," cried Mr. Lacourtelle, with a bewildered air: "the first thing you must do is to buy Lucien off."

"Buy him off! pack him off, you mean! me buy him off! What, then, Sir, do you suppose me to be fool enough to give money to bring him back, because I was willing to pay sharply for sending him away? Is this the way you would

aid in saving my family from dishonour and my child from disgrace? By keeping this young fellow to prowl about here, with my money in his pocket, and a chance of seeing my daughter again, unless I chose to lock her up in a dark room on bread and water!"

"You put me beside myself," fiercely cried Mr. Lacourtelle, rising: "what do you mean by all this? Do you now mean to say you will not consent to my son marrying your daughter?"

"*Your* son marry *my* daughter, Sir!" said Mr. de Villeforte, drawing himself up to the highest possible perpendicular stretch of consequence—"A de Villeforte *marry* a Lacourtelle! this is indeed too bad! Really I little thought nobility was *now* held in this light—little expected that you could dream of such a supposition. I think, Sir, we may better separate," and with these words he rang the bell. A servant opened the door, and stood waiting for orders. Mr. Lacourtelle, utterly confounded by the turn things

had taken, filled with despair at the failure of his almost certain expectations, and acknowledging, in spite of himself, a sort of respect for the proud carriage of the haughty noble, stood without power for a moment to move or speak.

From this situation of embarrasment and suffering he was released, though not relieved, by the sudden sounds of female lamentation in the loudest key of sorrow. It was Henriette's voice which pierced the mouldy walls of the old château, and sent shrill screams through the moth-eaten doors. The two fathers were roused from their respective inertness, and both were hurrying out of the room, when the servant who stood at the door was pushed violently forward against them, and Henriette came streaming in, with hysteric exclamations of woe, and flung herself alternately into Mr. Lacourtelle's arms and at her father's feet.

The baroness, Victorine, and Camille all followed her, the latter having been the cause of

this new out-bursting of his sister's emotion, by having announced the intelligence of Lucien's fate. A scene of Babel-like confusion arose. Six of these chief actors, that is to say every one of them, spoke together, in all the various tones of supplication, exhortation and recrimination. High words arose between the fathers, each reproaching the other in terms which it was impossible for either to understand; the mother endeavoured to command silence in the noisiest possible tone; the sister and brother flung their discordant peace offerings into the general chorus; and the servants, all called up by the contest, added their mite to the common stock of disturbance, chattering, crying, laughing and swearing, according to their different sexes, dispositions, or household occupations.

In the midst of all these commingling elements of confusion, while each was fixed with intense application upon its immediate object, and every one doing all that was possible for the defeat of their own purpose, in walked, with

wondering eyes, inquiring ears, and open mouth, the unintentional and unconscious cause of the scene. This was Lucien himself. He had, after a snatched moment with Valerie, in which he told her of the certainty of his lot, set out in search of his father, whose movement towards the château he had learned at home. He was breathlessly anxious to stop if possible the measures his father was about to take with Mr. de Villeforte. He shrunk from an unnecessary exposure of Henriette's weakness, which she however gloried in displaying. He felt himself bound in honour to spare her if possible the mortification, which, even could his father succeed in his views with regard to her, must be the inevitable consequence of his own rejection of her, beautiful and rich and amiable as he acknowledged her to be.

He therefore pressed on to the château; and when he arrived there, and found all the gates and doors wide open and no servant to be seen, and heard the discordant sounds proceeding

from the interior, in which the voices of his father and Henriette were so distinguishable, he did not hesitate to follow the impulse of his astonishment and curiosity, and he therefore walked unceremoniously into the room.

He remained for some moments unperceived, and too much amazed to know what measures to pursue. At length one pair of eyes were fixed on his fine figure, as he stood, with hands half raised and half outstretched, in an attitude of mixed benevolence and surprise—as if he would have calmed the tumult could he but have known its cause. The eyes which discovered him were Henriette's. She immediately uttered a wild scream of joy that silenced all the rest of the party, and she sprang away from the group into which they had hustled each other at the farthest end of the room, and was in an instant twisting tendril-like, round the neck and shoulders of Lucien.

The others immediately started after her along the floor, but seeing her safe sheltered, they

gave up the chace, and all stood looking on, while Lucien loudly entreated some explanation of the scene. Every throat instantly opened out again at one and the same time. Henriette claimed his protection, and swore that she was his for ever and ever. Mr. Lacourtelle attempted some explanation of what had passed; while Mr. de Villeforte and the baroness, discovering who Lucien was, flew at him as if to tear him to pieces.

"My sword, my sword!" cried the irritated aristocrat, "Let me revenge the honour of my house! This should be your work, Sir," continued he, with a reproachful look at Camille, "but the very foundation of social order is split asunder—plebeians dare to embrace our wives and daughters before our eyes, and our degenerate sons wink at the pollution. My sword, I say."

"Nay, nay, Sir, be appeased, I conjure *you!*" cried Lucien, with a loud voice, that *would* be heard. "You have nothing to dread, nothing to

deplore—all will be right in a moment—I am the innocent cause of all this. It is quite a mistake from first to last. My own father is as much in error as you are. I never dreamt, Mr. de Villeforte, of presuming to the honour of an alliance with your family. I admire, I esteem Mademoiselle de Villeforte beyond all expression; but I love another—I am irrevocably bound to another. Can I explain myself more fully. It is all a mistake."

"A mistake! another! admire! esteem! but not love me! What, Lucien, is it thus you would dare to thwart the mysterious doom that gave us to each other? Is this what you tell me?"

"Dearest Mademoiselle de Villeforte, this is no time for any thing but matter of fact realities. I have said the truth."

"Now, Mademoiselle de Villeforte," exclaimed her father, "what do you say to that? Are you sufficiently exposed? Am I enough dis-

graced? I recommend you to go and offer yourself next to the scullion boy, who is grinning yonder at the exhibition you make. What will you do now, let me ask?"

Henriette seemed scarcely to have made up her mind to that. The window she thought was a couple of feet too high over the terrace, to allow of her throwing herself out with combined impunity and effect. She was afraid to trust the sharp points of her scissars for an innocent wound. She thought for a moment of a fainting fit—then of hysterics—and then—but, looking at the stern reality of Lucien's face, she could not continue the scene, so she determined on a speedy retreat, and uttering a convulsive exclamation, between laughing and crying, a very pretty imitation of a nervous cough, she fled from the room, tearing her hair and wringing her hands. Her mother, sister, brother, and all the servants pursued her in full cry, and they just caught her in good time, as

she was going, or pretended to be going, to throw herself over the banisters of the kitchen-stairs.

Lucien, left alone with his father and Mr. de Villeforte, thought it necessary to say a few explanatory and decisive words. He therefore, with an air that commanded attention, told the fact that had the whole possessions of the De Villefortes, and the inheritance of all their fame been offered to him, on condition of marrying Henriette, he would not have accepted it; and that he was determined, and that no earthly consideration could stop him, to follow the career he felt his whole happiness to depend on. "Twice drawn for a soldier," said he, "I either now fulfil my duty, or I shall not be a living man to-morrow."

These emphatic words were accompanied by an expression, never before observed in Lucien's looks, and which seemed to penetrate his father's heart.

"Come, come along, my child," cried he, "the

wealth of the world would not make me thwart you more."

They left the château together abruptly, and neither spoke a word till they reached their home.

CHAPTER XII.

The day passed over in painful despondency. The little which there was of conversation was troubled and in snatches. Brief explanations of feelings, which he himself but imperfectly understood, were attempted by Lucien, to account to his father for that boundless and uncontroulable passion which urged him away; and the father saw that it was a fate less limited than that relating to a conscription list which had doomed his son to be a soldier. He bore the shock occasioned by the whole morning's disappointments with as much fortitude as he could command; and he was probably supported under it by an involuntary feeling of reliance

upon Isambert, and a conviction that his sentiments towards Valerie were such as might lead to his becoming to him almost a second son.

Valerie was not seen out of her own room during the day. She was busily occupied in the service of Lucien, superintending the preparation of some of his scanty wardrobe, and, as she had done before, arranging with her own hands the soldier's knapsack. But no tear fell this time on its contents. She knew he was to set off on the morrow, for not a day more could be spared to the conscripts. The grand army was actually on its march, and all the new raised levies had the strictest orders to follow it without the respite of an hour. Valerie knew all this, yet she could not shed a tear. Lucien was much with her. He had, however, a good deal of time to give to his father, and much to say to him of consolation, and much to listen to of affectionate solicitude. But he was not, in such a moment, overloaded with *advice*. His father had discretion enough to know that it is

not in the season of the heart's fulness that the mind of youth is fit to sympathize with precepts of morality and prudence. He trusted to the hereafter of reflection to ripen the fruits of his son's early imbibed principles of independence and honour, and he left his career to Providence and his own sense of right. He was astonished at Lucien's calm but firm avowal of his attachment to his cousin. He had never suspected such a thing. It seemed almost out of the course of reason and naturebecause *he* had not been privy to it. Yet that it could have existed at all, did not appear so wonderful as that it had existed without his knowledge; and he was more disposed to believe it a new-formed notion of Lucien, arising from his agitated sensibility at parting from Valerie, than an old and well founded sentiment, nurtured from the cradle and to be forgotten only in the grave. He therefore opposed neither remonstrance nor persuasion to stop the current of his son's profession of faith, but his mind secretly and involuntarily turned

towards Isambert, whenever Lucien spoke of Valerie's attachment; and in the same way a connecting link seemed to unite Henriette to every mention of Lucien's own passion. This *he* felt to be the proper order of things, and thus in his own mind he *would* have it.

The dinner was cheerless although the cheer was good; the hearts of father and son were fuller than their glasses; and nothing but Mr. Lacourtelle's urgent entreaties could have induced Isambert to continue his visit during this last day of his friend's domestic unity. He felt himself to be an intruder in his own despite; and as Valerie was not present, he saw nothing that could make him forget realities, with the self-willed perverseness which blinded him to them when she was there. Determined at length to remove all obstructions to the confidential communication which he knew must be desirable, on this last evening, between father and son, he made some pretext for quitting the room; and taking up his hat in the passage, he walked

from the house, and proceeded for some time at a rapid pace, in order to avoid a recall, and without at all calculating his path. He was rather surprised to find, after a short time, that he was within sight of the Château de Villeforte, having unconsciously followed the track which he had gone the preceding evening with Valerie and Henriette. He had not on that occasion approached closer to the château than the entrance of a back avenue, which led up to the farm-yard and so to the offices of the mansion. He and Valerie had there parted with Henriette, and he thought he could not do better, for his present hour or two of disposable time, than to lounge about the grounds of this ancient place, his mind being much filled with speculations on the characters of the various members of the family, whose conduct of that morning Mr. Lacourtelle had sketched to him.

He found full employment for his moralizing mood, in gazing on these relics of former grandeur and importance, and mentally tracing

their gradual decay, through the various revolutions which time or man had effected. Evening was coming fast on in its shadowy indistinctness, and Isambert continued to pace to and fro in large long alleys of elms and oaks, emerging at times from their gloom and walking in the open places of the park, his mind filled with thoughts of the past, and his heart with hopes for the future. Suddenly, as he raised his eyes, and cast his glances in the direction of an old and uncleaned fish-pond, which he had a few minutes before passed close to, he observed two female figures pacing the weed-covered circular walk which was close to its edge. One of them displayed great agitation, and the other seemed to argue with, and dissuade her from some desperate design. Isambert paused a moment. He quickly recognized the graceful form of Henriette de Villeforte, and he soon conjectured that it was her sister who accompanied her. He called to mind Mr. Lacourtelle's account of the morning's scene, and from that

friendly interpreter of Henriette's words and conduct, he had had a most touching description of her despair. His own impression, the evening before, had been highly favourable to this interesting girl, and he had heard nothing that had not tended to strengthen it. He had seen plainly her strong attachment to Lucien, but he had had no whisper of its extravagance; and, as he gazed on her now, he shuddered lest she might contemplate some violent end to what he had no doubt was most serious suffering.

He therefore lost no time in repairing close to the spot where she and her companion stood. He stole through a shrubbery which came close to one side of the pond, and he placed himself as near the edge of the plantation as would allow of his observing the movements of the sisters, without being, as he thought, seen by them. Although not, like some people, a listener on principle, or rather from the want of it, he thought this was an occasion which

justified even that means of ascertaining the intention of the lovely young person, in whose wild looks and passionate gestures he saw the incipient germs of a *felo de se*. He thus caught the following sentences of colloquial information.

"What then, Victorine, you *do* refuse me?—You are not then alive to the deep insult on our family honour, which calls for more than *my* life in expiation! Oh, Heavens, do I yet live to hear a De Villeforte say she could witness her sister's disgrace, and survive it! You will *not* drown yourself with me?"

"Indeed, Henriette, I don't see why I should drown myself because you are crossed in love."

"And you refuse to fling yourself from the top of the pigeon-house, which once was the tower where the Guaite called our ancestor's serfs to battle, to avenge the honour of our name?"

"Henriette, I positively will not do it. So there is no use in asking me."

"Then let *me* alone wipe out the stain! Let *me* immolate myself, nor survive the burning degradation!"

And with these words, uttered at the very highest note on her voice, Henriette flung herself bodily into the fish-pond. Victorine screamed with all her might, while Isambert, rushing through the brambles, was in a moment at the edge, and in another, by an active jump, he gained the middle of the thickly-clotted weeds and duck-meat that covered the stagnant water. He sank in the mud about half leg high, and immediately stooped to raise up Henriette, who had risen on her knees, and was, in the attitude of a mermaid, wringing the green fat of the fish-pond out of her hair. Isambert's agitation prevented his instantaneously seeing the safety of the make-believe suicide, so he dragged her very unceremoniously through the mud and out on the bank. She, of course, in a moment

recovered her insensibility, dropped her head and hands, and shewed no appearance of life; and Victorine (the confidant, but not the accomplice) thought she could do no less than faint away *as well.* She, therefore, dropped down upon the grass, to the woeful embarrassment of Isambert, who, afraid to leave her by herself, was obliged to take her up under one arm, while he carefully threw Henriette across his shoulder; and, bearing this double load of beauty and absurdity, he made his way as fast as he could across the park and up to the château.

He was met half way by the whole family, running out in the greatest alarm to look for the sisters, who had stolen away unperceived; and he had to encounter a mixture of wailing and inquiry, and resuscitation, and hartshorn, and sal-volatile, in such quantities as I do not care to enter on a detail of. Victorine soon recovered her understanding, and stood firmly on her legs; but nothing could succeed in

bringing Henriette to herself, until (to assuage the baroness's despair) the cook proposed to bleed her in the jugular vein with a large and sharp-pointed iron skewer—"and on that hint she spake."

Her first words were incoherent, as all parts of speech should be in such a case. Her first *thoughts*—will the reader believe it? were absolutely those of good sense and propriety. The whole process of her mind (as she herself attempted to describe it) had been one of wild and most extravagant confusion. The machinery had all gone wrong, the unrivetted wheels spun round with the unimaginable speed of those of Phœbus's chariot, and the loosened chain of reasonable thought had run, whirring along, till it suddenly came to the click which stopped the whole; and something, she could not tell what, seemed to strike against her sensorium, with the force of the clapper of the belfry clock—which, in one of its disorganized fits, had furnished Henriette with this whole illustration.

But the fact was, that the process of decomposition had commenced with her absurdity sooner than she thought, for it was when Lucien had renounced her love that her eyes began to open to the light. Still she could not, all at once, return to her senses. She persisted, during the whole day, to continue the deception on herself as well as others. She would not eat a morsel, although her usual healthy appetite called out for food; she rubbed her eyes into a state of inflammation, though not a tear was starting, and she heaved her beautiful bosom with forced aspirations, that were less like legitimate sighs than the wheezings of an air-pump. As evening approached, she naturally became cooler, and she might have subsided, before bed-time into a very moderate state of rationality, had she not perceived, from the windows of the château, the figure of a man, lurking about the grounds, which, in the imperfect light, she could not recognize, but wished to take for that of Lucien. She made herself

almost sure that it was he, in a fit of remorse for his morning's rejection of her love, wandering in hopes of catching a glimpse of her, and perhaps of pouring out some propitiatory explanation or retraction. But she, on the instant, resolved to read him a great lesson, and wishing also to produce a sublime effect on Victorine, she declared her determination to go instantly and drown herself in the water, running, as she little thought, the much more likely risk of smothering herself in the mud. Victorine followed her hurried flight towards the fish-pond; and there, on its banks, did Henriette commence her preparatory attitudes to attract the observation of him whom she believed to be Lucien, and those high-flown appeals to Victorine's sympathetic desperation, which she thought would at least produce a powerful effect on the listener, if they did not prevail on her sister to share the ducking she meant to submit to, for she knew well that the nearly dried up pond was of no dangerous depth.

The result has been described, but nothing could sufficiently express Henriette's mingled astonishment and shame at all these her scandalous proceedings, when the burst of returning propriety broke upon her brain, in the manner already mentioned. She was gradually preparing for this from the moment Lucien had so plainly avowed his own passion and disowned her's. When, to her amazement, she saw Isambert instead of Lucien in the pond beside her, and dragging her out of the mud, she was electrified by the disappointment first, and then by shame of his witnessing the scene, and fear of his suspecting her sham despair. The same feelings were working as she lay on his shoulder from the pond to the château. But it was not until she was fairly deposited by him in safety within the château walls, that the vapours of romantic delusion were really dispelled, and Henriette became suddenly sensible to the whole absurdity of her conduct, and felt a glow of natural shame suffusing her mud-covered cheeks

and bosom. Following the impulse of her consciousness and self-reproach, she hastily sought her own apartment.

Mr. de Villeforte and the baroness loaded Isambert with thanks and praise; and while he retired to disencumber himself of the mud and his wet clothes, the agitated mother went off to assist in the ablutions necessary for the purification of Henriette. Mr. de Villeforte very soon rejoined his daughter's preserver (or more correctly her picker up), and to inquiries of his name added warm assurances of gratitude, and a pressing invitation that he would take up his night's quarters at the château. This, however, Isambert declined; promised to call the next morning to inquire after the young ladies, and took his leave, prudently abstaining from all mention of the Lacourtelles, a name not likely to have given any higher flavour to the very savoury feelings of regard which he had already inspired. And while he turned his back upon the scene of this strange adventure, running

over in his mind the rapid incidents, which though so recent appeared scarcely real, she who had been the heroine of the adventure lay in her bed, where her mother had seen her placed, not sleeping away the fatigue of all these artificial excitements, but deeply cogitating upon the whole course of her conduct, and the train of her feelings for several weeks past.

She now saw clearly, and she no longer wished to reject the truth, that she had not in reality loved Lucien Lacourtelle. She felt that the spurious kind of attachment she had worked herself up to, was as flimsy as it was factitious. Founded on the worst principles of romantic mysticism, it had nothing better to support it than her admiration of Lucien's handsome person, and her determination to have a lover. But nothing had occurred to give consistency to her fancy. Lucien and she had no feelings of real sympathy. He was almost wholly uncultivated, while it was overdone refinement that led her into such excesses of sentimental foolery. Neither

had he put forward any of the means which are so essential, and which so rarely fail to gain a woman's love. The persevering assiduities; the adaptation of manner; the careful watching of every look; the ready ear for every word; the ardour in wooing; and the marked determination to win—these are alone the ways to the female heart. They would melt any woman but one of marble—and Pygmalion is a proof that there is a way to do even that. But none of those methods were taken by Lucien; and Henriette discovered, therefore, that she was really indifferent to him, just as she had wrought herself into the notion that she was madly in love.

In the twilight solitude of her bed-room, she frankly acknowledged her discovery—to herself; but from some lingering weakness of her nature, she half thought it necessary to make a transfer of her affection, or rather really to create an affection in herself for another; for the heart of woman, like nature, of which it should be an

epitome, mortally abhors a vacuum. Henriette's self-learned lesson was not thrown away. She did not rush into any nonsensical passion for Isambert, because he had lugged her out of the mud, or from any of the fantastic incitements to her affair with Lucien. But she was greatly pleased with the manly, plain, and steady tenor of his conduct, and she recollected more of his manner the preceding evening than she had noticed at the time; and moreover she dwelt, and pleasedly, upon all she had heard from Valerie of his previous transactions relative to the conscription, and of the events of his military career, as detailed in his letter to Mr. Lacourtelle. In short, Henriette at last, worn out by her exertions and excitement, began to doze quietly away, with a notion that it was but common gratitude to her preserver that she should fall asleep in the pleasantest possible reflections relative to him.

When Isambert reached Mr. Lacourtelle's, the moon was just rising, and faintly lighting

the rural and placid scene. He distinguished his friendly host pacing with a measured step before the door on the little lawn; and, joining in his walk, he abstained from any detail of what had passed at the château, and entered into the conversation by which Mr. Lacourtelle strove to beguile his thoughts, during the absence of Lucien and Valerie, who had wandered off together in some of the moonlit paths.

Valerie had been incessantly employed during the day in the manner already mentioned, and Lucien had divided his time in the way most likely to soothe her, and cheer his father's spirits. The latter was the more difficult task of the two, for he found his father to sink more and more as the hour of separation approached, while the gentle and timid girl, who was going to suffer the most cruel affliction that could befall her, seemed every moment to gain new power to meet the evil from which she found it was in vain to fly. This true courage of reflection is most often found in women, who make

up by it for their constitutional deficiency in the brute bravery which men more frequently display. Valerie seemed to rise above all weakness; and her calm deportment filled Lucien with a solemn sentiment of respect that was still a novelty in his feelings for her.

Her work completed, his knapsack arranged, the night fairly set in, she sat down, fatigued, and with a pensive air, by the open window of her bed-room which looked out on the garden, whence she saw the red moon slowly rising, and throwing its shadowy lustre on the fields and shrubberies. Lucien stood beside her, leaning tenderly towards her, but without speaking. She looked up to his face, and the expression of deep sorrow which clouded it for a moment almost brought a return of all the former emotions which she had been contending against so long.

"Let us walk, Lucien," said she, rising, and taking his hand in hers; "the air will refresh me, and I feel cramped from being so long in this little room. See that there is no one in

the drawing-room—Mr. Duflos may have returned."

Lucien stepped into the drawing-room which adjoined Valerie's chamber, and finding that no one was there, he called her out; and, Valerie throwing a shawl over her shoulders, they passed into the garden, and in the direction of the copsewood formerly mentioned, through which lay the direct path to Flixecourt. Just as they entered into this little grove they perceived Isambert on his return from the château, and saw him join Mr. Lacourtelle on the lawn. Lucien had till that moment had his thoughts wholly fixed on Valerie, and he was silently picturing to himself the life of loneliness which she was about to lead durin his absence. A momentary doubt even pa sed his mind as to his right of inflicting this ong wretchedness upon her, for the gratification of his own vanity and ambition. But it was now too late to think of sacrificing their indulgence, and he was shaking off the harassing reproach, when Isambert

caught his view. The electrical chain of thought was touched, and its thousand links seemed to vibrate at once. Associations crowded upon Lucien. He knew not how to separate nor to define them. "Can this be jealousy?" asked he of himself. "This hurried rush of sensation is quite new to me. I never liked this man—he has taken precedence of me, and in spite of me, whenever we have come together. Is he then superior to me? Not, certainly, in personal advantages. But when I am gone—when absence throws its veil across my looks—when he is here, alone, to follow her up—for I know he loves her—may she not change? May she not *find* him superior, if indeed he is so? It is too late now—I must run the risk—but could I [illegible] bind her by some solemn pledge?" Such [illegible] Lucien almost immediately acknowledged to [illegible] passing fears and fancies. She [illegible] in its silent workings. She im- [illegible] k out his thoughts with earn- [illegible] ought of their being together.

perhaps for years—perhaps for ever. He could not resist her intreaties; and half cursing the weakness or the force of his attachment—for he knew not which it was that made him for a moment doubt her—he confessed to her that he should feel more at ease, or rather less uneasy, if before they parted, some mutual pledge was passed between them.

"A pledge, Lucien!" said she, reproachfully, "what pledge can I give you stronger than I have already given? Do you not possess my whole heart? Are you not sure of that?"

"Yes, dearest Valerie, I know you love me now, and I am sure you always will. Yet when I think of absence, of time, those terrible enemies of affection——"

"Oh, do not speak so, Lucien! I should hate myself indeed if I thought you believed me capable of change, or within the possible reach of caprice."

"No, nor do I, Valerie. It is not exactly change I dread, nor caprice neither—nothing, in

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short, proceeding from yourself. But—in fact, I do not well know what apprehension haunts me—but if while I was away, another might love you, might persuade you to love him, without exactly forgetting me!—if, in short, any one was to gain ever so slight a footing in that heart that should be wholly, exclusively mine—the very imagination of it sets me mad even now!"

"Oh, Eugen, have no such fear. Do, my dearest fri[illegible] lover, my husband—I can find no words s[illegible]ng enough to express what I consider you to me—do think worthily of me and of yours[illegible]! Your doubts are alike disho[illegible]ouring to us both, but I know they are the [illegible] of love and therefore I forgive them. [illegible], Eu[illegible]n, could I forget you, or who could I love [illegible] you? I have no fears for [illegible] I see you go into the wide world, far, far [illegible] to all the temptations of beauty and [illegible]—[illegible] I do not fear *you*: to whom could I [illegible] the le[illegible] portion of the heart that is yours, [illegible] only!"

The name of Isambert was on his lips; but he could not at first utter it. Still he found it impossible at such a time to maintain a forced reserve, and he thought it more manly, and more truly affectionate, to confess his own weakness, than to leave Valerie in doubt, and part from her with an untold suspicion lurking in his breast. He, therefore, repeated to her the reflections that had been passing in his mind, and confessed his fears that Isambert would, during his absence, attempt to gain her affections, or at least, to excite her to listen to the avowal of his. Valerie heard him with surprise. At another time, a feeling of pleasure might have mixed with it; for she held Isambert's character and conduct in the highest esteem, and the notion that he loved her was, to her own individual feelings, highly gratifying. But when she viewed such a supposition as a violation of the sanctity in which she considered her attachment to Lucien, she shrunk shocked from the very thought of Isambert's possible affection, and she

then felt as anxious as Lucien was to seal their plighted fidelity by some sacred promise, which both the heart and conscience would preserve from violation.

During this conversation they had passed by the village of Flixecourt, and crossed the high road southward of the town, and were following the path that led by the church, and through the little suburb, of which the reader may recollect the description in the opening chapter. When Lucien's impassioned avowal of his fears was just at its height, and Valerie's sympathy with him had led her to the result just mentioned, they both at once perceived that they were actually close to the church, the small side door of which was open, for the admission of such penitents as chose the evening hour for putting up their silent prayers.

"Oh, God!" exclaimed Lucien, with strong emotion, and straining Valerie in his arms, "that I cannot now enter here with you, and in the sight of Heaven and man secure you mine for

ever! That obstacles should exist to this, in the tedious protractions of the law, and in the infamous restrictions of what they call religion! I must part with you, unaffianced, unattached but in heart, and at the mercy of a thousand contingencies. Perhaps, ere another moon may shine upon this sacred edifice, in spite of all your present feelings, and my adoring confidence, uncontrollable circumstances may arise—unlooked for changes of the heart—unparalleled, unprecedented causes—to make you enter this very church, the bride of another!"

Lucien shook with emotion as he thus exclaimed, and Valerie either thrilled from her own or from the force of his. She felt terrified at the pictured probability which he had traced, and but one wish engrossed her. It was to satisfy him, and bind herself. To accomplish this by the most solemn means within her power was her next thought—and full of this ardent desire, she cried,

"Here then, Lucien, let us enter here! The

open door seems to invite us—the solitude, the secrecy, the solemnity of the place and hour suit an occasion so holy as this. I could not now become your wife, till forms and dispensations are procured, for which an age might as well be required as the time which we cannot now command. But the altar is open to us. The eye of Heaven will witness our vows. The holy spirit of love will dictate our contract, and I shall be your own, your fast bound bride, as securely and as sacredly, as if priests and magistrates had sworn me yours, with all the rites of religion and law. Come in, come in, and be satisfied."

She led him towards the church-door, and they entered together. All was still and silent. Not one pious soul was there to disturb the solemn scene. A lamp hung dimly burning before a shrine. It seemed to invite the lovers to solemnize their purpose there. Thither they moved, and knelt together on the steps of the altar; and there, in deep and not unhallowed fervour, they

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pledged their vows of everlasting love and faith.

"Never, so help me Heaven," exclaimed Lucien concluding his engagement, "will I marry another—never bend in plighted union at another altar, till you are joined with and sanctify the pledge."

"And all the saints be witness," murmured Valerie, "that but for you no vow shall ever pass my lips—no man but you receive my faith and troth—never, never!"

The echoes of the church whispered a repetition of these words—but no mortal voice returned them—and no glance but that of Heaven itself fell on the lovers, as they rose from their knees and slowly retired into the open air. As they quitted the church, Lucien stopped for a moment. He cast one look deep into the misty aisles, and assured himself that no prying eye had marked the scene. He then folded Valerie once more in his arms, and passionately pressing his lips to hers, he exclaimed,

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"Now, I have nothing to require. You are mine, irrevocably and for ever. Henceforward, I exist doubly, in you and in myself. Absence has now no terrors for me. I shall be with you, even though absent—shrined in your heart. Now indeed I glory in being a conscript, for Valerie is the conscript's bride!"

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CHAPTER XIII.

Within two months from the evening which witnessed the scene described in the last chapter, Lucien Lacourcelle had joined the grand army on its march through Poland, and had actually entered on his duties as a soldier, in one of the regiments of lancers in the division under the command of Prince Eugene. When he, among others of the conscripts, arrived at the head-quarters, and was about to be appointed to a particular corps, he saw, among other officers who inspected the new levies, the prince to whom he had been indebted for admission to the review of the garrison of Amiens. He inquired his name, and found him to be no other than Eu-

gene Beauharnois. He immediately presented himself, adverted to the Amiens adventure, and addressed a personal request that he might serve under Eugene's orders. He was as quickly recognised, his petition granted, and himself nominated to one of the most distinguished regiments, with a certainty of being, during the whole campaign, under the actual orders of one of the bravest and best of Napoleon's generals. Thus placed, he had the first object of his ambition gratified. He was on the road to distinction and success, and his fate seemed now in his own hands. He asked no more. He instantly applied himself, with all the earnest activity of his nature, to the duties assigned him. The drill serjeant had not much trouble in completing the soldier, which nature had sent nearly ready made into his hands; and Lucien was ere long noted by the prince himself as one of the most forward and promising youths in the army.

A series of letters was regularly despatched by Lucien, and for some months as regularly

received, detailing to the much loved objects from whom he was separated, the course of events connected with his individual services, and with the military operations in which he was an actor. But this correspondence, the delight of Lucien's hours of repose, was interrupted, as the triumphant advance of the army led to a rapid succession of actions, with all their usual concomitants of privation, hardship, and fatigue. Several of his hurried letters were lost, and the few which reached home contained warm and reiterated entreaties that his father and Valerie would attribute to the true causes the apparent neglect to which he felt his irregularity might be ascribed.

Lucien wrote in the spirit and energy of a soldier—to his father; and in the passionate tenderness of a lover—to Valerie. His personal details were mixed up in his correspondence with the assurances of unbounded attachment as a son, and a husband—for it was in the latter light he persisted to consider himself to Valerie.

He mentioned with enthusiasm the affairs which he witnessed and shared in, and proved that they were all victories, even when that fact was questioned by *the victors*. He told of his own hopes of promotion, of his escapes from all serious injury, having only received during the campaign one or two slight scratches; and his account of the doubtful and murderous battle of Borodino, ended with the glowing anticipation of his soon marching in triumph into the sacred city of the Czars. He wrote once more, to tell that tale of glory. His last letter was despatched from Moscow, the very day that the army entered its gates, in all the pomp and pride of conquest.

From the hour of separation with Lucien, Valerie conducted herself as became the character of which I have endeavoured to give a faint idea to the reader. Of the separation itself I have not chosen to attempt a detail. The facts attending on Lucien's departure and Valerie's distress were but scanty materials for descrip-

tion. They have occurred, with various modifications, to almost all who have loved and parted. It is the *feelings* alone that may be traced with any hope of effect; but in sketching what took place on Lucien's first threatened absence from home, I told pretty nearly the tale of what Valerie suffered when the real separation came. For it is scarcely the actual moment of parting that is the period of most feeling. It is the previous hours or days of preparation for the event that try the heart with agitation and nearly make it break with anguish. When the mind is made up to the inevitable evil, and hope has no resting place, sensation itself for awhile seems dead, and the object is far away before we feel it to be really gone. When that drear conviction came home to Valerie, and she awoke to the feeling of her desolateness, she did not lie down under the affliction, but exerted every energy of intellect to bear up, as became the chosen and affianced bride of him whom she at once deplored and doated on. She felt as if his

bold spirit had infused a portion of its daring into hers, and as if her affection was to be shown worthy of its object, by force as well as depth. So completely did she suppress all evidence of weakness, and so much did she exert herself to supply Lucien's place, in many domestic matters in which she had never before interfered, that her uncle, following his wishes as much as his reasonings, could not believe her to be very deeply distressed, and thought it after all possible that Isambert's evident attachment was soothing her for Lucien's absence.

Isambert was a frequent visitor, and his great regard was evident not only for Valerie, but to her. He displayed in a thousand ways a tender and delicate feeling towards her—but he never spoke of love, nor gave her an instant's cause of alarm on the subject of Lucien's apprehensions. From the day on which her lover left her, she had had no opportunity of displaying her fidelity, except in the silent indulgence of her passion—but nothing on the part of Isam-

bert put her constancy to the test, and she continued to receive him with the same cordial esteem and growing regard, which had all along marked her sentiments and distinguished her conduct.

Isambert knew full well from Mr. Lacourtelle's information, that Lucien had declined Henriette de Villeforte's affection, from his avowed attachment to his cousin. Mr. Lacourtelle, in broadly confessing his own views on all the bearings of the subject, made light of this boyish fancy of his son, and pronounced it contrary to all natural, and rational, and ecclesiastical rule. He declared himself quite unable to conceive the possibility of a man falling in love with his first cousin, unless she had a large fortune, or in some such spirit-stirring contingency; but he quite scouted the notion of a fancy of the kind standing the test of six months' absence, or bearing the brunt of *his* opposition. He therefore encouraged Isambert to all possible diligence in making his approaches

to Valerie's regard, and expressed his firm reliance on Lucien's safe return after a while, with sufficient experience in the art of war to enable him to open the trenches once more against Mademoiselle de Villeforte, and carry her person, heart, and fortune, either by sap or storm, as might be most convenient.

Isambert listened to all Mr. Lacourtelle's suggestions; but if he acted on them it was in such a way as neither satisfied his impatience nor alarmed Valerie's reserve. Isambert saw clearly that she did love her absent cousin, and he had no doubt of the passion being mutual. He was prudent rather than passionate, and he knew that an abrupt avowal of the attachment which he truly felt for Valerie would have shocked her delicacy and ruined his hopes. He calculated on many chances lessening, if not removing, the obstacles which lay in his way. If he did not actually speculate on Lucien's possible death, in the terrific contest to which he was exposed, he could not, perhaps, divest

himself of the notion that such an event was possible. But, as he did not wish to go too deeply into the nature of his own sensations, neither must we, being content with the fact that he continued his steady and unchanging course of intimate and friendly visiting, without once startling Valerie's fears or committing his own feelings.

Isambert was also, during all this time, a frequent guest at the Château de Villeforte, where he had made for himself a footing of considerable intimacy. Circumstances, not now to be revealed, had given him a consideration in Mr. de Villeforte's eyes, infinitely greater than that arising from his being the preserver of his daughter, for *any* country bumpkin might have been so, and plebeian services of any extent had no value in his estimation. Isambert was gradually becoming a great favourite with the whole family; and, from what has been already told, the reader will be prepared to learn that Henriette was, day after day, forming a sincere and

rational attachment for her new friend; but totally unencouraged by him, for he never felt or professed any thing beyond sentiments of friendship, founded on admiration of her beauty and talents, and esteem for the whole tenour of her conduct and manners, which he thought exemplary after the severe trial of the heart which he believed her to have suffered. Her affair with Lucien had taught her the danger and disgrace attendant on the unmeasured conduct she then pursued, and she was resolved, on this occasion, to risk no such repetition. Victorine and Camille ran the usual course of their unimportant occupations and amusements, the zeal with which they formerly followed their elder sister's wild example being moderated in proportion to her present calmness, and both of them, as well as the baroness, giving their full share of intimacy to Isambert, who was thus in the highest possible favour with all parties.

From the time of Lucien's departure, Mr. de Villeforte and his spouse had been gradually

softening in their inveteracy to the very name of Lacourtelle. They were not bad hearted people, though their pride often gave them the appearance of being so; and they listened by degrees to Isambert's cautious and conciliatory remonstrances, till at length they gave their full consent to a renewal of the visiting between Valerie and their young people, and an intercourse of a most warm and friendly nature was perfectly established between them. This was to Valerie in every way an advantage. From the accomplishments of her friends, she acquired many a hint for her own improvement, and in their refined and now rational society she felt a relief from many a painful thought. By tacit consent Lucien's name was never mentioned—but the secret echoing of Valerie's heart prevented its ever being hushed.

Thus did affairs go on, till the time of the receipt of Lucien's letter giving an account of his entrance into the Russian capital. From that period, gloom and doubt and sorrow came thickly

upon our heroine's heart. The news of the burning and the abandonment of Moscow stole in faint whisperings over France, like a noxious yet invisible mildew, blighting the promise of the land. France had been raised to an elevation of unbounded transport by the triumphant progress of the emperor and the army. The whole world seemed subdued; and the first bulletin, dated from the Kremlin, realized the hopes of the most unlimited enthusiasts. The fall from this point of exaltation was to instant and inevitable despair. Day after day brought the woeful intelligence of retreat, and wretchedness, and ruin; and at last, the return of the lone and crest-fallen chief set the seal upon the fiat of destruction which fate had issued against the mighty host he had marched with. Regular returns of casualties were vainly demanded by the nation. Thousands of anguished families clamoured forth unanswered calls for their sons, their brothers, and their husbands. Whether death in some of its various shapes of horror had made them

its prey, or captivity bound them in chains, few, very few, could ascertain. Entire cohorts were lost and unaccounted for. Soldiers and chiefs had perished in a bleak and desolate obscurity. The ruin of the whole had been alike prompt and mysterious.

One point alone was ascertained in reference to Lucien Lacourtelle: he had not returned to France with the skeleton remnant of the army. He had disappeared, no one knew how; but every probability—a million chances to one—seemed to say that he was no more. But while inquiry had one nook into which to pry, or hope even a shadow to grasp at, Mr. Lacourtelle continued to inquire and to hope. At length, however, he abandoned his fruitless attempts, and he was convinced that Lucien had shared the fate of the hundreds of thousands who had fallen by the frost, by famine, or the sword. Mr Lacourtelle felt more even than he himself expected, at this drear conviction being confirmed in his mind. He mourned his only child with

manly weakness; and he would have sunk utterly under the affliction, had not his growing affection for Isambert, and his now certain expectation that he would become Valerie's husband, saved him from complete despondency.

How Isambert's mind and heart were acted on or agitated, I must leave the reader to conjecture, as I myself was left.

But Valerie? How did she bear up against the agonizing incertitude? With an unvaried, unflinching belief that Lucien still lived—and a firm expectation that he would one day return! Love is sometimes an inspiration, and sometimes a delusion. We shall presently see which it was, in the instance before us.

Valerie did not despair—did not even doubt—but she suffered probably more than if she had. Her mind was in a perpetual ferment of nervous expectation. Every day brought the hope of an arrival, either of intelligence of Lucien, or of himself. Her uncle and her friends felt it a duty to remove, if possible, this

fevered and anxious reliance on what they deemed impossible. They now dreaded the actual confirmation of their belief in Lucien's death, more on Valerie's account than his, whom they were convinced was out of the reach of further suffering. For her, they apprehended the shock with the worst anticipations—and they ceased all efforts at inquiry for fear of receiving a decisive confirmation. Mr. Lacourtelle had but one object now in view—Valerie's marriage with Isambert. He talked freely on the subject with *him*; and the latter made no scruple of discussing the means of attaining the object on which he confessed his happiness depended. Mr. Lacourtelle consequently turned on all occasions to the mention of Isambert, with the warmest affection, and at length threw out such plain suggestions as left Valerie no doubt of the views which she had all along suspected. But this caused her no concern. She did not interrupt her uncle's speculations—and was indifferent to them, as

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long as Isambert made himself no party in them. He had not as yet ever ventured one word beyond what was consistent with the tender friendship, which she saw and was happy to believe he had for her. But at length he spoke out more plainly.

Isambert had waited more than the amplest term which expectancy could with any rational pretence have dictated. But he found, at length, that his happiness was frittered away, and Valerie's very health impaired in a fruitless delay, which had exceeded the utmost bounds that delicacy or decorum could prescribe. He resolved to avow his passion, and at once to demand the reward of years of fond and unceasing attachment. He balanced long before he decided on this final step, and when he had resolved on taking it, the means to employ, the words to use, in preferring his suit, became a new source of embarrassment and difficulty. Accident at length, the lover's readiest friend, gave him an opportunity of speaking his mind.

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Mr. Latourelle was now once more entering with his accustomed vigour upon the management of his farm, which nearly a year of hopeless sorrow had led him totally to neglect; and in the too great exertion of some bodily effort, he had the misfortune to fracture an arm. Isambert was happily at the house, on one of his frequent visits, and to him the afflicted workmen ran with the news of their master's mishap.

When the first messenger came to him, he was sitting in the little drawing room with Valerie, and this sad interruption to their conversation threw her into great agitation. The man told his short tale, and hastened away in search of the village surgeon; Isambert was rushing out to the relief of his wounded friend, when he observed that Valerie was almost fainting, from the alarm thus suddenly excited. She was much changed of late; even trifles had the power of affecting her, more than important events could formerly have done; and her nervous apprehension magnified her uncle's

accident into somewhat much worse even than it really was.

"My dear Valerie," said Isambert soothingly, "there is no need for this alarm. This accident though severe, can be by no means dangerous."

"Alas, alas! Every thing is now matter of alarm to me. Unprotected and helpless as I shall be without my uncle's care, what will become of me!"

The accent of forlorn distress in which these words were uttered, struck upon Isambert's heart. At that instant, ill-timed as it was, unfeeling towards the sufferings of his friend as it might appear, unthought of, and unreckoned on—at that instant Isambert felt irresistibly impelled to prefer the declaration of love which had been so long suppressed, and which had resisted a hundred fitting occasions of developme nt.

"No, Valerie, no," cried he, "you are not helpless, not unprotected. Let what may happen to all the world beside, I am your support and

solace, if you will permit me. Even now I must tell it—I cannot, if the fate of the world was at stake, longer delay the avowal—I love you, you alone, with unutterable fervour. Look here," added he, taking from his breast a locket with a piece of Valerie's own hair, "here is the token, which I have so long worn upon my heart, that you, and you alone are dear to me. This braid of hair, steeped in your tears, discovered in the knapsack, which I received from you the first day I marched as a soldier, has never left its place there where you should reign. I know not what I have said—I am hurried away beyond myself—this is no time, I feel it to be wrong.—Forgive me, Valerie, but I have spoken, and now you know me! I fly to assist your uncle.—For God's sake forgive me this abrupt avowal—but I was not my own master, your sorrow quite overcame me. All will be well—have no fears!"

With these words, he kissed her hands fervently, and rushed from the room. Valerie was

unable to stir or almost to think. This wild and ill-timed avowal of love, so unlike Isambert's usual steady and well poised demeanour, mixed with the shock at the news of her uncle's accident, quite overpowered her, nor had she for sometime strength or presence of mind enough to rise from her chair, till her uncle walked into the room, pale and faint, and leaning on Isambert's arm. That sight in a moment brought her to herself, and all her active and affectionate feelings were revived; and until her mind was set at rest by the surgeon's assurances of his patient's perfect safety, she did not allow it to revert for an instant to considerations purely her own. The first sensation which might be called selfish, of which she was conscious, seemed to spring from the recollection of that lock of hair, which Isambert had so impassionedly but so incautiously brought to light. A thousand recollections of Lucien were associated with it. The anguish from which flowed the tears with which it had been wet—the in-

toxicating delight which followed the first confession of his love—the scarcely less delicious wonderment arising from the discovery of her own passion, and the whole chain of circumstances and feelings which had united the days that had so rapidly passed since then, all rushed at once on Valerie's brain, and filled her heart with the image of her absent lover. She had no room for any other thought. Isambert was forgotten and his declaration of love unheeded. But though her mind was thus occupied with Lucien, it did not interrupt her constant and careful attendance on her uncle, for during several weeks that he suffered under the effects of his accident, she never permitted another to perform the duties of his nurse.

During this period, Isambert, though a constant visitor, never mentioned the subject nearest to his heart. He lamented the rashness of that moment when, forgetful of his cautious reserve, he risked by an abrupt avowal the loss of what he sought. He now felt that he had not waited

long enough, and accused himself of indelicacy, in not giving Valerie time to mourn her former lover, and let her mind settle into the conviction of his death, which every one else admitted. He felt embarrassed more than ever in her presence. He would have given worlds to recal his words —and at times even hoped for the possibility of Valerie's forgetting what he had uttered. But she had not forgotten it. The impression made on her had been at the moment vague, but it afterwards acquired all the consistency of fact. She brooded over it, with mingled sentiments of pleasure and pain. She could not resist the former, at finding that she was indeed an object of attachment to such a man as Isambert, and she lamented the loss of his friendship which might follow her rejection of his love. But still she found it impossible to swerve from her vows of fidelity to Lucien—and the very air of solemn singularity thrown over the circumstances under which those vows were made, gave them a sacredness in her view much greater than had

she been *but* legally wedded. She also dreaded as much as Isambert, his recurring to the subject which caused her such varied emotions; yet she felt that it was not worthy of her, nor fair to him, to let the matter rest where he seemed disposed to leave it. She considered it almost as criminal to have listened to without repelling, as to have admitted and sympathized with an avowal such as Isambert had made; and she finally resolved, on her uncle's recovery, to explain herself to Isambert, and put upon a proper footing the nature of the only sentiments which she could admit either in him or herself.

Some women have the fine union of sense, and feeling, and *tact*, that enables them to do what others, as amiable and as sensible, but wanting in the essential requisite, can never accomplish, although, perhaps, their own happiness and that of another may be sacrificed to their indecision. Valerie was one of those who could well effect such a delicate task—and such a one was the communication she determined on

making to Isambert. She did make it, in firm, and friendly, and even affectionate terms. She told him of her sacred engagement with Lucien —and she still persisted in expressing her conviction that he lived, and would yet return to her. She implored Isambert, therefore, to spare her from any farther expression of his attachment—to love her as a friend—to banish all more tender feelings from his mind—and to turn his affections to some other object more worthy, or at least better able to reward them.

Isambert possessed great good sense and steadiness. He never perhaps had forgotten himself so much, as in his hasty declaration of love. But he was now on his guard; and the attainment of such an object as he had in view, added to his usual circumspection. He resolved not to press his suit, but patiently to wait the course of events, the gradual decay of her present feelings relative to Lucien, and the growth of a sympathy with his own.

The winter of 1813 now set in, and a year

of dark uncertainty had closed over the fate of Lucien. Valerie grew day by day more nervous and looked worse. Her health was evidently suffering from the gnawing uncertainty that oppressed her. Every thing was done to soothe her and keep her up, by her uncle, by Isambert, and her friends at the château. She received the attentions of all with gratitude, and strove to repay them by a forced cheerfulness, but the restless mind was too clearly evidenced, in the fading bloom of cheek, and the gradual decay of frame, which speak in terms too plain for affection to be deceived by.

CHAPTER XIV.

Among the various circumstances which acted on and increased those feelings in the mind of Valerie, there was one, so nearly similar to those of her immediate suffering, that it excited a deep and painful sympathy, which she encouraged rather than repressed.

Several of the conscripts who had quitted Flixecourt and its neighbourhood about the same period as Lucien Lacourtelle, had perished in that fatal expedition in which he was supposed to be lost. The great majority of these youths had marched from their native villages, with light hearts, joyous at the prospect of variety before them, indifferent to or forgetful of

all that they left behind. Some, however, were less unfeeling—or rather let us say unthinking, for that is in most cases the chief fault of youth. Recollections of home endearments, of boyish friendship, or adult affection, came across their minds in all the sombre shadows with which memory robes our far-off objects of regard. The cottage hearth, the anxious parents, the playmates, or the one most cherished and beloved form, were seen in distant perspective, and the frosts of time and absence (more chilling than those of the North) were insufficient to congeal the ever-springing fountains of the heart.

Of all the village lads who felt *thus*, one was conspicuous. I do not remember his name, although I was told it with his story—but it is of little importance now, for its owner is no more. He perished, miserably and ingloriously, in the wilds of Russia, snow flakes for his shroud, his bleaching bones his only monument.

The thoughts of this poor young fellow during life were almost wholly fixed on Aglaë his

sweetheart; her name was the last word he uttered, ere the current of existence was stopped by the pitiless element that killed him. He pressed the hand of a passing comrade, and in complete exhaustion he with difficulty murmured, "Ah, my friend — this cruel north wind! Aglaë!"—and in a few minutes he was a frozen corpse.

His comrade was one of the two or three who returned to Flixecourt. He had many a sad detail to give to the inquirers after those who perished. To Aglaë he had little to say, but to repeat the dying sentence of her lover. She caught each word with a fixed and intense avidity. She seemed to devour every syllable —and when the narrator had finished, she pressed both her hands abruptly to her forehead, and rushed from the cottage where the recital had taken place.

This girl was, in her sphere, what is to be found in every circle in city or village, the one superior person to whom the others could not

help looking up. She was far above her ordinary companions in much that elevates the mind—in talent and information. But she wanted judgment, that important ballast without which the most trim-built intellect must sometime or other founder. Aglaë had been, when quite a little girl, placed as servant in a religious house established at Amiens, and with the seeds of education there acquired, she imperceptibly caught what turned out a fatal after-crop of weeds—or wild flowers, quite as useless. Her quickness in learning was pleasing to each amiable recluse who formed the little society of the house; and they vied with one another in encouraging and aiding her efforts for knowledge. But what they could communicate or choose to give fell far short of the opening curiosity of their growing protegée. Religious instruction and moral lessons were not enough for her. She sighed for the mysteries of poetry and romance, and she soon found that these were not enshrined within the walls of a convent. But Amiens afforded other sources

for the supply of her wishes. Circulating libraries furnished her with the works of the poets, and the theatre embodied both their conceptions and her expectations. By what stratagem she procured the books or saw the plays I know not—nor is it of importance. The effect, however, was of serious consequence. Her head became filled with sufficient of the fancies of others to make her hitherto unleavened imagination ferment. She was born, if not decidedly a poetess, at least poetical, and into the ready channel of rhyme her now excited feelings naturally turned.

Her attempts at writing verses were really curious; but they had no charms for her religious instructors, who on discovering her secret understanding with the inspired sisterhood of Parnassus, turned her away in disgrace, and sent her back to her native village, with as bad a reputation as their piety could establish for her. Once more fixed with her mother, a poor paralytic woman, incapable of either guiding or

restraining her, she gave a loose to her literary instinct, and read and wrote whenever she could procure materials; until the gradual development of deeper feelings turned her into a still more dangerous pursuit. The current suddenly changed from the head to the heart—if physiologists will allow the distinction—and her passion for poetry gave way to that of which the unfortunate lad already alluded to was the object. The attachment between them was mutual, and it had a flavour of delicacy mixed with its strength, which refinement might hardly believe compatible with rustic love.

When her lover was torn from her by the merciless conscription, Aglaë, in the natural extravagance of a romantic mind, elevated him into a hero, and herself into a heroine. If depth of feeling and purity of thought, devotion to the object beloved, and absence of all selfish considerations were sufficient to constitute the parties what she thought them—they were so. At any rate, the sequel of their unhappy fate

removed them out of the track of common individuals of much higher degree.

During her lover's absence with the army, Aglaë abandoned her mind to wild reveries and unbounded flights. She had worked up her feelings to an intense pitch of enthusiasm, and the radical defects of her understanding soon generated a disease that was its final ruin. On her early separation from the object on whom her thoughts were all centered, she shewed an excess of grief; and when that subsided, it was as the burning sunlight sinks into depth of shadow and unbroken gloom. The night of her mind was setting in.

Month after month rolled on in hopeless ignorance of the fate of him, for whom alone she counted time. Doubt, and dread, and despondency came upon her heart in quick succession; and the sad fulfilment of her worst anticipations fell upon and crushed a mind already wasted and worn to decay. She fled from the cottage irrecoverably mad.

All the prayers and blessings of her infirm old parent, and the active attentions of her considerate neighbours, were exerted to soothe the malady which nothing could assuage. Its results, as is commonly the case from such a cause, were only dangerous to its unfortunate subject; for she was harmless in her wanderings to all but herself. She roved about the neighbourhood from house to house, neglectful of all precautions against heat, and wet, and cold; and the effects were utterly destructive to her naturally delicate constitution and tender frame. Consumption fixed itself in her fair bosom, and its wasting influence was soon visible in the hectic on her cheek, and the distempered brilliancy of eyes already lighted by insanity. It was a sad sight to mark her strolling listlessly about the fields, sitting in fixed despair by the river's side, or suddenly presenting herself at the doors or windows of the houses she frequented; some wild ditty wildly bursting from

her lips, or a thrilling laugh, the first startling notice that she was near.

To none were those wild visitings so painful as to Valerie. Often has she been roused from her own deep reveries by the piercing melody of the maniac's voice, singing her incoherent rhapsodies, in strains as wild and irregular as they. Valerie was the chief object of her torturing regard. When baffled in her efforts to find her at home, she used to lie in wait for her in the fields and lanes where she knew her to take her solitary walks; and fastening on her there, she would pour forth her lamentations on their mutual sorrows, and trace with shocking accuracy the close analogy in their fate. She had acquired a perfect knowledge of all that was made public of the ruin of the army; and she dwelt on every instance she had learned of individual suffering, winding up the most harrowing descriptions in the calm deep apathy of madness, by solemn assurances that such was the fate of Valerie's lover, as well as of her own.

The fixed and oracular air with which these boding announcements were given out, gave to the utterer an appearance of inspiration; and the heart-breaking feelings thus excited in Valerie, used to force her to run from her hapless persecutor—for the time more frantic than she. A wild scream or fiend-like laugh would follow her, as if the unconscious maniac had joy in the anguish she created.

It was in the spring of the year that Aglaë's derangement had commenced. The summer had now passed away. Every day increased the ravages of her distemper; and at the beginning of winter she was, both in mind and person, a mournful illustration of the desolate season then at hand. Hundreds of wild fantasies had successively filled her brain. She had imagined for herself and all around her, countless transformations, incongruous and grotesque. The seasons and the weather had ever a strong influence on these fancies. As winter approached, a new notion fixed upon her mind, so strange

and fanciful, that it could scarcely have been succeeded by one more extravagant, even had it not been, as it was, *the last* of poor Aglaë's frenzied imaginings. From the hour in which she listened to the details of her lover's death, she had the almost incessant habit of repeating the last few words which escaped his freezing lips. "This cruel north wind!" was hundreds of times a day uttered by her, in a variety of intonation and expression that made the listeners shudder. From the frequent repetition of the words, the idea seemed at length identified with her feelings, so as to become the ruling impulse of all she said or thought. She suddenly gave up all mention of her lover—all allusion to the scenes of horror accompanying his death—and "the north wind" alone was the theme of her ravings. For a long time she personified it with every attribute of terror, and shrunk affrighted from the demon she had conjured up. But at last a far different idea took possession of her mind. It was that *last* one to which I have

already alluded. She now believed herself enamoured of the fiend! Instead of hiding herself, as before, from every breath of air, she courted the chilling breezes of winter, and in the most tempestuous weather was most happy. She used to rush forth delighted when the wind was most boisterous; and when it really came from the north, her frenzied ecstacy was at its height. With her hair unbound, and none but the slightest covering on her shivering and decaying form, she would run to meet the blast, baring her bosom to receive its deadly embrace; and, almost breathless, and fainting from its effects, endeavouring to give utterance to the frantic expressions of endearment with which she apostrophized her destroyer. Many scraps of her incoherent verses, written at this time, came into my hands. The following is a pretty close transcript of the ideas of one of them.

MAD AGLAË'S SONG.

Oh, the north wind is mine own true love,
Let others find him cold;
To *me* he is warm as a downy dove,
When he lies in my bosom's fold.

The frost-work glittering gems his wings,
As the live long night he lingers;
And soothes me with soft whisperings,
And twines his icy fingers

Through these dishevelled locks of mine,
That float so strange and wild.
Oh, God! and where is *he* who so oft
At their braided beauty smiled!

The NORTH WIND swept the plain of death,
When the battle din was done—
And he sucked the dead men's mouths for breath,
And he kissed the lips of *one*

Whose name must ne'er be breathed by me,
Who lies in a snowy mound,
Coldly, yet uncorruptingly,
Buried above the ground!

But the NORTH WIND now is my only love,
He meets me on the wold;
And he nestling lies like a feathered dove,
Within my bosom's fold!

One night in the very midst of winter, Valerie was sitting in her little bed-room reading, or attempting to read, for her thoughts flew far away from the page on which her eyes were fixed. Her uncle and the servants had been for some time in bed, and the house was perfectly still. While she sat silent and thoughtful, a gentle tapping at her window aroused her. She listened awhile; the tap was repeated; and she stood up and moved to the window, which she immediately threw open, having no fear of harm. A broad gleam of moonlight came in upon her, but nothing was visible except the sheet of snow which covered the garden, and the pendant icicles shining from the branches of the fruit trees and shrubs.

The air was piercingly cold; so Valerie drew in her head and was closing the shutter again, when a burst of maniac laughter made her spring shuddering back; and in an instant the well known form of Aglaë was standing before her.

"I thought to make you start, Mademoiselle Valerie, but did not mean to frighten you," said she, in a hoarse voice, which was interrupted by a violent fit of coughing.

"You *have* though, Aglaé," replied Valerie; "and it is not kind of you to alarm me thus."

"I would not be intentionally unkind to you; you must forgive me—for I do not well know what I do. It *was* very thoughtless of me."

With these words the poor girl leant on the window stone; and when Valerie took her hand soothingly, she found it as cold as ice. Aglaé shivered in every limb, and her teeth chattered together.

"For God's sake, my poor Aglaé, come into the house! you are scarcely covered with clothing sufficient for the day, much less for this bitter night. I will go round and open the door for you."

"Indeed, I cannot go in—I am going to meet

him—a little farther off, down by the river side, where many a time you have walked and talked with poor Lucien. It is now *my* turn—my lover waits for me.—He is cold, piercingly cold—but I will warm him here!"

She threw aside the scanty covering of her neck, and pressed her icy hands upon her bosom.

"Dear Aglaë, come into the house," said Valerie, in a supplicating tone, and unable to restrain her tears.

"Well, well, then, come round and open the front door."

"I will immediately, my poor girl," replied Valerie, hastening from her room. She passed quickly through the sitting-room and passage, without disturbing the family, and gently unbarred the door opening on the little meadow.

"Come softly in," said she, extending her hand, in hopes of clasping that of the wretched wanderer; but she was not near, and Valerie,

on looking down the meadow, saw her flying as if from some violent pursuit. At about a hundred yards distance she stopped, and a hoarse effort at laughter came upon the sharp air, followed by one of those frightful fits of coughing which were the sure effect of her least exertion.

Valerie stepped a few paces from the door, but the mad girl instantly started from her halting place and fled. Valerie saw that pursuit was vain. She only therefore attempted to seduce her back by gently calling on her to return. The only answer sent back by Aglaë was a half articulate attempt to sing some scattered passages of her song—and the broken voice died away, little by little, as the unfortunate girl went farther off. In a few moments she was neither to be seen nor heard.

Valerie drew back into the house, and retired to her room awhile in hopes of her return. She placed her lamp in the window, but its signal flame failed to draw back the maniac. Some-

times Valerie opened the shutters, and wrapped in a shawl she listened anxiously. She once or twice thought she caught the wild tones of the song in snatches—but nothing at last was heard, but the sharp whistling of the wind through the stiffened branches.

Valerie could not rest. She went gently to the door of the room where the man servant slept, and called on him to arise. He soon came out, half dressed and half asleep. She told him what had passed, and desired him to go forth and seek the poor object of her inquietude. The man readily obeyed, for he was a kind hearted fellow, and doated on his young mistress: and, like all the country folks, at once pitied Aglaë and thought it a duty to hasten to her relief. After an hour's fruitless search, he returned to the house, and told Valerie his belief that she must have gone back to the village. Valerie hoped so, and lay down in bed. But she could scarcely sleep. The image of Aglaë, pale, emaciated and shivering in the frosty air,

was ever before her, surrounded by the painful associations she had awakened. But her fears for the poor girl's safety were lessened by the recollection that the river was thickly frozen, and that usually ready means of destruction thus rendered impracticable. It was late in the morning when she awoke from a disturbed doze. The woman servant was sitting weeping by her bed-side, and the man stood at the foot with a melancholy expression of face, and as if waiting to tell his own tale of sorrow.

It was briefly that Aglaé had been discovered by some workmen, soon after day break, quite dead, on a little mound near the river's edge. Her hair was frozen to the ground, and her body and clothes stiffened like it. The snow which had fallen in the night, had already drifted over part of her form, but enough remained uncovered to betray her to the labourers, and it was soon found that life was gone beyond all hope. Her fate excited but small surprise; and she

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was buried the same evening, with little preparation; for the village sexton said, that even the grave had been long ready for and expecting her.

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CHAPTER XV.

The year 1813, which followed the disastrous retreat from Moscow, had passed away. A new army was supplied by nearly exhausted France, to take the place of the veteran legions lost to the country for ever. The spring of 1814 had opened, and with it that wonderful campaign of home-fought battles, which, more than all he had ever commanded in, proved the might of Napoleon's military genius. The memory of the Russian expedition was beginning to fade from the public mind, and the hope of new conquests was fast effacing the horrors of recent defeat. The buoyancy of French feeling, thus rising above the disasters of the nation, was

in its individual development almost as easily assuaged. Private grief was becoming less poignant, and nature once more seemed to raise its drooping head.

The immediate objects of my observation, and I hope of the reader's interest, partook, with one exception, of the feelings common to the country. The first burst of sorrow over, and every hope abandoned, Mr. Lacourtelle became gradually resigned to his loss; and all his friends united in the belief that Lucien would never more be heard of—all but she, to whom even proofs would have almost failed to bring conviction. Valerie continued firm in her belief of Lucien's existence, with that tenacity of opinion which so often results from the failure of circumstantial proofs on a mind resolved to doubt. Her uncle in the mean time continued, with persevering and almost persecuting determination, to press her to accede to the wish on which his heart was so resolutely bent. Entreaty, argument, expostulation, assailed our

heroine in their turns, and when reason failed to change her, sophistry was unsparingly brought in. Mr. Lacourtelle thought, in fact, that any means but those of actual force were justifiable, to persuade Valerie out of a fancy that would be her destruction, and into measures certain to ensure her happiness. Besides this, he considered that his own chances of comfort or support in his declining years, depended wholly on the connection with Isambert, which every rational feeling seemed to urge; and when he considered that the well-being of that inestimable friend was also at stake, there was scarcely any measure that his conscience would not have excused, for the attainment of the consent on which all depended. He thus no sooner found one argument to fail than he essayed another; and he turned in his head a hundred stratagems, few of them practicable, and none possessing a chance of shaking the obstinate fidelity of Valerie's heart.

I have already mentioned the calm and well-

regulated way in which Isambert received from Valerie the decisive communication of her sentiments relative to him. He recovered, by this prudent conduct, the ground which he had lost with her. It was not that the abrupt and premature, though long delayed confession of his attachment had lessened her regard—that would have been out of nature, and certainly far out of the nature of woman—but it was that her reliance on his forbearance and considerateness was somewhat shaken, to which she felt herself indebted for the long suppression of his wishes. But he now gradually resumed his station in her confidence. He discreetly abstained from every word or look which might renew her alarm; and he saw that gratitude was silently working its way in the bosom inaccessible to the approach of a warmer passion.

While Valerie thus reposed in the most unbounded confidence on Isambert's delicacy and honour, and he, with redoubled caution, endeavoured to confirm her reliance upon him, and

Mr. Lacourtelle turned in his mind every possible method to wean his niece from what appeared her preposterous belief in Lucien's existence, an event occurred, in its operation so mysterious and extraordinary, and in its results so important, as to involve directly or remotely the fate of every individual for whom I have been endeavouring to excite the reader's interest.

Spring was now advancing rapidly upon the frozen traces of winter, and Nature in all its varied productions bursting into renovated life. April had begun, the days were lengthening, and the charms of country enjoyments fast reaching maturity. The turmoil and terrors of invasion had however broken upon France, and the vicissitudes of war were felt on the frontiers and sent their effects far into the heart of the land. Mystery and doubt were abroad. Unknown agents of conflicting parties were scattered all through the country; and every social institution seemed tottering to its base.

Rumours of the Emperor's defeat, of dangers to Paris, of the arrival of the Bourbons, and a hundred other reports, speaking alike the language of what had hitherto appeared *impossibility* were now afloat. Every one was more or less affected by this state of vague incertitude; and it was a season well adapted for the management of either public intrigue or private machination.

Valerie had for some weeks observed the peculiarly agitated and occupied air of Isambert, and for four or five days, a long absence for him, he had not been to see her. She made some observations on this unusual lapse in his visiting, to her uncle one day after dinner, but he seemed to waive the subject without concurring in her surprize, or expressing his usual regret at his favourite's non-appearance. He merely remarked that "there was no doubt good cause for it;" and Valerie seeing nothing in the circumstance requiring more particular observation, let the remark pass, and occupied

herself as usual in her afternoon domestic employments.

After some time she left the house, and remained awhile in the garden,* in that close and care-taking intercourse with her plants and flowers, so much enjoyed and so well appreciated by every lover of rural pleasures. Thence she wandered out into the fields, and she followed whatever path presented itself without selection or care. Her mind, as it was wont, flew back to the by-gone days when she rambled over these same fields, with Lucien by her side; and many a melancholy recollection came fast upon her. She recalled the fate of poor Aglaë, as she passed by the little mound where the unfortunate girl had sighed out her spirit; and horrid thoughts of frost and snow and death arose in the misty fears which in spite of her would sometimes shadow her hopes. It was almost dusk. The sun was down; and she was returning towards home by the copse-wood path, when a rustling among the

trees caught her attention, and she observed, at some paces before her, a figure cross the path, apparently for the purpose of observation rather than concealment. Without a feeling of superstition, she possessed a portion of the nervous sensibility common to her sex; and her long state of agitation had increased tenfold this constitutional defect. She hurried on, and tremblingly crossed the stile; and just as she got safely into the meadow she saw the figure again, but more plainly, standing in the shelter of the hedge, and clearly courting her attention. It was evidently a man, wrapped in a long military cloak; and, without exposing his face, he courteously saluted Valerie, and by a pressing gesture invited her to stay, while he advanced cautiously towards her.

A thousand notions rushed upon her, and she was for a moment transfixed to the spot. But while she stood the man advanced, and terror then seizing her completely, she turned towards the house and moved hastily forward. She

looked behind her as she fled, and saw that the stranger had stopped, and by every possible attitude displayed his disappointment at her flight. Seeing that she observed him and paused once more, he took a paper from his bosom and threw it towards her as far as it could fly, and then he retired to a considerable distance, to observe her movements.

Valeria's hesitation was but of short continuance. She was now convinced that this mysterious stranger and his billet had some connection with the one subject of her hopes and fears. She could not, even in circumstances of danger, have neglected any chance information—and now the long sought intelligence seemed within her reach, and proffered through a friendly medium. No sooner did she conceive this thought than she hurried towards the spot where the paper lay. She took it, unfolded it, and read the following words, evidently written in haste, but for the purpose of quieting her apprehensions,—

"Fear nothing. It is a friend who approaches you—a friend of yours—of Lucien—the bearer of his last wishes—of a letter written by his own hand!—Have no fear!—but *be discreet!* Receive the letter, and the token contained in it. —Speak your mind fully—but do not require *me* to speak, nor attempt to see my face. This is from a friend, be satisfied of that—and fear nothing."

She trembled violently as she read these words. Her blood seemed chilled at the intimation that Lucien was no more—that she was about to receive a letter written by his hand, and containing his *last* wishes. The whole mystery of the scene, the hour of dusk, the dim light, the stranger, the prohibition to look on his face, or hear his voice—all threw a solemnity into the transaction beyond any common train of feeling; and Valerie was rendered utterly incapable of movement or speech, although her safety might have depended on either. The stranger, either taking her imme-

bility for consent to his proposal, or resolved not to lose the advantage given him by her fears, came forward with a quickened pace, holding a letter in his hand. Such was Valerie's perturbation that she nearly fell to the ground, and she felt that she must have sunk had not the stranger's supporting arm upheld her. He, too, she thought, trembled—and that feeling gave her new courage, for had he meant her evil she thought he would have been more firm. Recovering her strength and fortitude, she determined to take the letter from his hand; and acting on the injunction she had received, and thus tacitly consented to abide by, she asked no question, nor did she make any attempt to see the face which was studiously turned from her, and concealed in the folds of a handkerchief, and shadowed by a large slouched hat.

"Read!" said the stranger in a hearse and hollow whisper, which made Valerie shudder. Still leaning on his arm, she broke the seal. The page was but scantily filled—but she

thought she could have sworn to Lucien's hand! Her head began to swim, and she was obliged once more to pause.

"Read!" said the same voice, with an impatient but not unfriendly emphasis, as if the suspense suffered by the stranger was still greater than her own. As Valerie, roused by this appeal, was about to read, something fell from the folds of the letter, and stooping to lift it from the earth, she discovered it to be a braid of hair—and on closer examination, she distinguished some of Lucien's mixed with her own. This seemed to bring conviction of authenticity to what was passing—and Valerie proceeded in breathless palpitation, to trace the lines which the twilight rendered scarcely legible.

They were as follows:

"Do not hesitate, dearest Valerie, to receive this as the genuine record of my sentiments. The hand writing, the lock of our hair, the sentiments themselves, all speak the reality of this address. I have been long lost to you, and

the world. I must renounce all hopes of you and it. Reasons which I cannot avow, nor enter into, make it impossible for you ever to see me more. I hereby absolve you from all obligation to be bound by that pledge, which in the hour of hope and youthful passion, we exchanged together. You have many days of happiness yet before you. *One* worthy man at least loves you; he is my father's chosen friend; he has my hopes for his success; and if you become his, ye shall both possess my ardent prayers for your welfare and happiness. I thus renounce you, my Valerie, for ever. It would be cruel indeed to link you in misery to the fate which has doomed me to lose you. I write this far away from you, and our happy home, which after you receive this, I shall never, never see again. A thousand blessings on you, my beloved Valerie—and my father too.

"Farewell,

"Ever, ever yours,

"LUCIEN."

Valerie's agitation increased with every word that she read; and as she came to the conclusion of the letter, the tears which were almost choking her, forced themselves in torrents from her eyes. She sobbed aloud, and it required all her self-command, to save her from going into hysterics. She held by the arm of the stranger with both her hands, and she exclaimed, in passionate emotion,

"Oh, tell me, is this true? Can it be? for my heart gives it the lie! Can Lucien have renounced me thus for ever? Is it thus he repays my faith, and keeps his own? Who are you, mysterious man, that come with this frightful letter? You have desired me not to require you to speak—nor to look at your features. But I will do both—I demand of you to confirm the truth of this—to tell me of my beloved Lucien—and your hollow voice will not be enough. I must *see* you, to trace in your features the truth or the falsehood of what you tell me."

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The man gently struggled to shake her off, and attempted to escape.

"No, no," cried she, "you shall not leave me; I will cling to you for ever, till I find out more of this—I have no fear of you—you can do me no harm, that will not be better than this agony of suspense. Oh, do not, if you be a man of common feeling, preserve this cruel silence—do not drive me to despair—tell me where is my Lucien—what has become of him—where have you placed him—what force keeps him from me? Tell me, tell me, I beseech you."

With these words she sunk on her knees, holding fast by the stranger's cloak, and retaining one of his hands in hers; his trembled as she held it in her grasp, and he still kept his face averted, and a handkerchief held close to it. For some minutes longer, she continued to implore the stranger to speak, or to let her see his face—but in vain. He seemed greatly moved, but he increased his efforts to loosen her hold, and he was nearly escaping from her

exhausted efforts at detention, when suddenly a new light seemed to break upon her, she started up in recovered energy, and flinging away the hand she had before convulsively held, she cried, in a tone of bitter upbraiding—

"Yes, at length I see through this mockery, this cruel, this infamous deceit! Shame, shame upon you, Isambert! How could you descend to this? Is it by vile means like these you could expect or would condescend to win my consent, or force me to violate my pledge to my beloved Lucien? Oh! were his brilliant and beautiful features to flash their anger on you now, how would you shrink into yourself! Away from me—but I will keep this forged record of the base attempt, to strike you dumb, and make you hide yourself as you do now, if ever you dare approach me more."

She was then turning to go towards the house, when the man threw himself on one knee, and with still increasing emotion seized her hand and pressed it to his lips. Warm tears fell on it,

but they could not soften Valerie's resentment. She drew her hand indignantly away, and without deigning to cast a look behind, she left the suppliant as he was, and hastened to the house.

CHAPTER XVI.

On Valerie's return home she passed quickly to her own room, and desiring the servant to inform Mr. Lacourtelle on his return from his farm-yard occupations, that a head-ache would prevent her appearance at supper, she undressed and went to bed. In that refuge she was sure of safety from her uncle's importunities; and there she was best able to recover from her perturbation, and retrace the events of the evening.

It was long, however, before she could calmly enter into an active examination of all that had passed. The whole scene seemed swimming before her brain, in the confusion and vagueness of a vision; and had she not held in her

hand the letter with the lock of hair, she would have half doubted the reality of all. Anger and contempt for Isambert's mean artifice were her uppermost feelings—but they seemed softened by an involuntary throb of pity, at the recollection of the burning tears, which fell upon her hand while she poured out her reproaches. Upon ample consideration, she had no doubt but that her uncle was more to blame than he, for she was certain that the plot had originated with him, and that he had even forgotten all parental delicacy, so far as to furnish Isambert with a lock of his son's hair, to mix with hers and aid in this deception, revolting and unfeeling as it was.

Again and again she read the letter; and while astonished at the accuracy with which the hand-writing was counterfeited, she thought the sentiments it expressed were but clumsy attempts at describing what Lucien had felt for her. She was only irritated with herself, for believing for an instant that he could calmly and cruelly

abandon her, for she relied on it that did he love, as she was still convinced he did, nothing on earth could make him give her up, and least of all to a rival. She was deeply grieved at the whole affair, mortified at having been even for awhile deceived; and a thousand unquiet notions assailed her, while picturing the new artifices, and perhaps more serious attempts, of which she might be made the victim. The night passed over in this state of perturbed thought; and when she arose in the morning she suffered in reality the evil which the evening before she had but feigned. She knew, however, that she had no retreat from the persecutions of her uncle, if he had actually commenced such a system, and she resolved to meet him at breakfast without any allusion to her adventure, unless he himself adverted to it. Her chief difficulty was how to treat Lambert if he should appear; for she was conscious that did he choose to deny his conduct, she could produce no proof against him; and in her uncertainty as to what course she should pursue,

she determined not to mention his name to Mr. Lacourtelle, nor to reply to any observation which might have him for its object.

The first remark which Mr. Lacourtelle made, after his usual tender inquiries for his niece's health, was one very foreign to the subject of these personal concerns which so oppressed her. It was to inform her that the emperor had abdicated, that the allies had entered Paris, and that the Bourbons were restored. Little as she understood or cared for politics, these were points of too great importance not to command her attention, and it was turned for awhile from her previously absorbing reflections. In the midst of her inquiries as to further particulars of this strange news, she was almost thunder-struck to see Isambert walk into the room, with an air of unusual vivacity, while he stretched out his hand to her to receive the accustomed cordial salute. She started back, as if from the touch of a serpent. The blood rushed into her cheeks, and in a moment more she felt them to be cold and pale. Isambert seemed confounded—but

he made no observation, and merely addressed himself for a moment or two in a whisper to Mr. Lacourtelle. The latter received what Isambert said with evident pleasure, shook him by the hand, and almost immediately quitted the room, leaving him alone with Valerie. No sooner was he satisfied that they *were* alone, than Isambert approached her, and, with an air of frank yet modest contrition, he said,

"Valerie, I did not expect this—not quite this—although I was prepared for some little expression of your displeasure. I see that you have, even before I could confess it, found out my imposture — your uncle has betrayed me."

"No, Sir, he has not. He has not mentioned the odious subject of your artifice. The discovery was quite my own."

"Well, well, but surely you are not inclined to visit this innocent deceit as a mortal sin, Valerie? And Heaven only knows how you could discover my secret?"

"This air of levity was alone wanting thoroughly to disgust me. Let the subject drop for ever. If possible, Monsieur Duflos, never let me see you again."

"Monsieur Duflos! and yet you say you know my secret? Come, come, Valerie, you jest with me."

"Jest with you! Alas! is the day indeed come that I am to be thus insulted by you? What else could I call you? Can I ever again address you by the more familiar name which our intimacy permitted? Is it possible after what has passed?"

"Good God, Valerie, why not? Do you think that a change in my situation, or the assumption of another name, should make any change in your style of address? No, no, you must ever call me Isambert—no other name shall be mine when I am spoken to by you."

"This is too bad—" cried Valerie, bursting into tears, "this heartlessness—this cruel, this

cold indifference to what you have made me suffer—"

"Made you suffer, Valerie! What do I hear? What can you mean?"

"How can you presume to touch my hand?" exclaimed she, snatching hastily from him the one which he had tenderly taken between his. "How venture, how dare to look at me, after your debasing conduct last evening!"

"Last evening!" exclaimed Isambert, in an accent of surprise. "Last evening, Valerie! I implore you to explain yourself?"

"What then, was I not sufficiently humiliated at the time, but would you now be vile enough to deny what passed, for the mean pleasure of making me repeat it? But no! I scorn you now too much to submit to that—from this moment my lips are for ever sealed upon the subject—would that my eyes could close for ever upon you—you are now quite odious to me!"

"What insanity has seized on you, Valerie?" cried Isambert, detaining her as she attempted to

leave the room. "You must and shall explain yourself. I call heaven and earth to witness I am utterly ignorant of your meaning. "You talk of last evening—I was then in Paris—I did not leave the capital till eight o'clock, and I have travelled all night."

There was an air of veracity in Isambert's look and manner, that stamped authenticity upon his words. Valerie could not a moment doubt him—neither could she all at once give up the belief in what she had so firmly established in her mind. She thought some horrible delusion was sporting with her. She paused a minute or two—looked searchingly into Isambert's countenance—and said to him, with a tone of profound emotion,

"Tell me, Isambert, as you hope for heaven, did you not meet me in the copse at sunset yesterday—or procure some one—or connive at some person's accosting me, and giving me a letter? As you hope for heaven, speak the truth!"

"As I hope for heaven," answered he, "I know not what you mean—I was in Paris at sunset yesterday—and I am wholly ignorant of the rest."

"What then did *you* mean just now, by what you called your imposture, by the assumption of another name, and all those juggling expressions? Answer me truly—in pity—and quickly."

"I meant only what your words made me suppose you to have discovered—only that I have been all along known to you by a name not my own—that I am not Isambert Duflos, but the Viscount de Montmenil, son of the count of that name—that the return of the king allows my father and myself to throw off our concealment, to assume our titles, and avow our principles. *That* was my secret, Valerie—and if some other mystery of a more serious nature has oppressed you, acquit me of all share in it, I conjure you—and if there be a man alive who has dared to

insult or injure you, give to my pride its full measure, by suffering me to be your avenger."

The rapid explanation which followed this speech, told Isambert all that the reader knows of Valerie's evening adventure. Such was the overpowering interest which it now possessed for her, that Isambert's avowal of his rank and change of circumstances passed almost unheeded by. She only thought of him, with a pang for the unjust suspicion she had cast upon him, and a passing sensation of pleasure at the bright prospect opening before him. But her mind was almost wholly absorbed by the deep contemplation of her adventure, and of the mysterious visitant. She did not give herself time to dwell on the minute details of the transaction—she only felt that it was in itself *reality*—and she started back from the painful and horrible sensations it excited. One thrill shot through her, which seemed to combine every feeling of anguish and delight—it was that the stranger was Lucien himself—that she had been once more *with* him

—had felt the pressure of his hand—and trembled in sympathy with the emotion which shook his frame. The whirlwind of feeling that accompanied this thought was insupportable, and Valerie hurried to her chamber and threw herself, almost distracted, upon her bed. A thousand agitating thoughts assailed her there, as to the possible motives or desperate circumstances that could have caused Lucien's abandonment of her, and then her mind came round again to the one central point of its disordered movement, the wild impulse that seemed to say it was Lucien himself she had seen.

Isambert had listened with astonishment to Valerie's story, and had read the letter, in which such evident allusion was made to him, without being able to fathom the motives of the writer. He communicated the transaction to Mr. Lacourtelle, and they consulted long together. They could not resist the belief, extraordinary and almost incredible as it seemed, that it was Lucien who had written, although they doubted

much his having himself delivered the letter. The hand-writing was positively the same as his, but why renounce Valerie without cause or ex planation? It must have been, they thought that he had himself given his affections to anothe or that he was resolved to try her fidelity to th utmost. The latter seemed the more probabl notion, and thus they were forced to let it res But they took immediate measures to attemp once more the discovery of Lucien's fate. A instant application was made in the prop quarter, to ascertain if his name was includ among those of the prisoners taken on the retre from Russia, and of whom it was now easy procure authentic information, in consequen of the peace which had been just made.

Isambert saw in this whole occurrence, tu as it might, the total destruction of all hopes of success with Valerie. Her deep root attachment to Lucien was now too palpable for doubt. The very thought that he had cast her off, seemed to bind her affections the closer; and

Isambert saw it was in vain to shake such a passion as this. His pride, too, was aroused. He could not condescend, much as he loved her, to waste away his life in ignoble efforts to force her to receive his love. He was, in fact, worn out; and this late display of her feelings completed the revolution which such persevering discouragement had been effecting in his.

Isambert still loved Valerie tenderly, but he could not love her meanly. He was determined to give up all thoughts of her, but in the friendship to which she herself had wished to limit his regard; and had he still wavered, there was a motive at hand to have decided him in this course. Mr. de Villeforte had been his father's early friend, and this latter was no other than the emigrant owner of the château near Amiens, where Napoleon had committed the devastation formerly described. The Count de Montmenil, from that perverseness of feeling which drives people to run headlong into difficulties for opposition sake, continued in exile

when solicited to return to France; and had no sooner found himself forbidden to return, than he resolved to come back. Accompanied by his son, he made his way to Amiens, and, under the feigned name of Duflos, he had for years lived concealed in the neighbourhood of his old and favourite residence, and while keeping it up, in the way we have seen, suffering all the privations for want of means himself, which at length forced his son to sell himself as a soldier, and into the service of the man whom he mortally detested.

When Isambert communicated to his father the circumstances of his introduction to the De Villeforte family, he gladly seized on the occasion to renew his friendship with his brother aristocrat, and he made him acquainted with his situation. It was this knowledge that procured Isambert so good a footing with the master of the château, who joined in all his and his father's plans for the remission of his sentence of exile. Added to their efforts, was the interest of the

marshal whose life Isambert had saved in Spain, and who had promised him to use it for this object, the second favour which Isambert had demanded, on confiding to him his real name and his father's circumstances. But all was ineffectual to excite the emperor's attention in his behalf. The gigantic projects then in his mind, gave him no opportunity of thought for such an insignificant matter; and the Count de Montmenil and his son were forced to continue in their obscurity till Napoleon's overthrow effected their elevation.

Some time before this event, Isambert had confided to Mr. Lacourtelle the secret of his real name. He thought him entitled to this return for his warm friendship and continued kindness; and, as he expected, the knowledge of his rank and opinions neither added to the republican's respect nor lessened his regard. Mr. Lacourtelle saw that a change in the political atmosphere was at hand, and his hatred to the Bourbons did not affect his attachment to

one of their well-wishers. Isambert was prevented from avowing himself to Valerie, only from the apprehension that it might seem like an attempt to influence her, by the attraction of titles and distinctions, which he, notwithstanding, knew her heartily to despise. He requested her uncle not to betray the secret before he himself thought fitting, yet he did not quite reckon on his discretion, and was therefore prepared to expect Valerie's knowledge of the facts sooner than he meant to divulge them; nor did he, even when she received him with such violent repugnance, blend a reproach with the news of his father's public acknowledgment, which he whispered to Mr. Lacourtelle, although he attributed his niece's conduct wholly to his premature disclosure.

For some days following that which led to the explanation of these circumstances, and to Valerie's account of her mysterious adventure, Isambert, as has been mentioned, joined with Mr. Lacourtelle in forwarding every necessary

inquiry for Lucien, and he also used indefatigable efforts to trace the stranger who had been the cause of Valerie's alarm and suffering. These last attempts were, however, vain. In the then disorganized state of the police, it was impossible to acquire any certain information, as to one of the many suspicious persons, natives and foreigners, just then straggling through the country.

The news of Isambert's real rank was received at the Château de Villeforte with great delight. Henriette made no secret from her family of her readiness to enter into the alliance, which her father now avowed to have been for some time projected by him and the Count de Montmenil. Not one day passed over until it was proposed to Isambert by both the fathers; and, on the next, having received the assurance of Henriette's consent, he was formally proposed and admitted as her lover, and preparations entered into for the speedy solemnization of the nuptials.

Two dreary weeks drawled on, without any

circumstance occurring to relieve poor Valerie's torturing suspense. At the end of that period, however, an answer came from the War Office, couched in the pith of official condensation, but to the purport that Lucien Lacourtelle, of such a regiment, had been severely wounded and taken prisoner at the battle of Krasnoé, on the retreat from Russia; and that it was ascertained, by inquiries made through the Russian authorities, that he had been subsequently liberated, at the intercession of the officer to whose care he was committed.

A very few days after this intelligence was received it was followed by another important and convincing proof, that tended at once to clear away the mystery hanging over Lucien and his singular fate, and which gave to the afflicted Valerie a respite from the chief and most intolerable cause of her anguish.

She was one morning at breakfast with her uncle, discussing, as had been for several days their wont, the various extraordinary and con-

flicting circumstances connected with this affair. Valerie now knew that Lucien lived—that love *had* been to her an inspiration, in unceasingly telling her so—and, in her usual spirit of wilful extravagance, she could not avoid hoping and believing that bright days were yet in store for her and her lover, in spite of his dreadful letter, and all the gloomy obstacles that seemed to hover between them. Isambert's approaching marriage was a subject of great joy to her, as it removed the only bar to her perfect freedom; and now that the fond hope of her uncle's heart was beyond the power of realization, she was delighted to observe that his mind turned with renewed vigour to the contemplation of his long-mourned son's existence, and to efforts for tracing his retreat and penetrating the mystery of his conduct. While they talked over their mutual plans for further exertion, the village messenger brought a letter into the room; and Valerie's devouring eyes soon saw that it was addressed

in Lucien's hand. She tore open the seal, and read as follows:—

"*Strasburg, May* 8, 1814.

"Here, on the very frontier of France, and quitting it for ever, I pause before I enter on my eternal exile, to address one word to her who is and has been the first and last object of my distracted thoughts. It was not, dearest Valerie, my intention to have ever written to you again. I wished to spare you and myself the cruel protraction of an intercourse which now must end—for I never can see you again, or at least you never, never must see my face. My last letter told you this—and I with my own hands put that letter into yours! Yes, Valerie, I was the stranger, whose mysterious silence first alarmed and then deceived you. It was I who, at your feet, bathed your hand with my tears, and received the reproaches meant for another, as innocent and unoffending as myself. It is in his defence I now write to you—it is to emove the unfair imputation which your sus-

picions have cast upon his honour, and in doing this, in acquitting Isambert of all deceit, of all knowledge of the measures I have taken, I cannot longer avoid some explanation of the conduct which must lead you to believe me the falsest and basest of mankind.

"My confession is soon made, for it does not involve, thank Heaven, one moral fault. You know how I have loved you, but you never can know how I still love you. You are every thing in life to me, but you never must look on me again! In one word, I am no longer what I was—no longer suitable to a being of beauty and grace like you. Once, I may now confess it—with agony of regret and without a boast—I was not unworthy of being mated with you—of being seen joined with you, as your second self. I was proud of my appearance, I own it; and to have walked hand in hand with you in life, reflecting reciprocal ornament, and receiving equal admiration, was the bright dream of my early hopes. But ambition and vanity

forced me away from you—made me discard the blessings I had within my grasp—and I am punished! I am now hideous—loathsome to myself to look at—and never more to be seen by you. At the battle of Krasnoé a desperate sabre wound disfigured me so much, as to make me scarcely recognizable. As I lay on the frozen field for a whole night, the frightful climate completed what my enemy's steel had begun; and when I was saved by one miracle, and cured by another, and could examine my disfigurement, so shocking was my appearance, that I was on the point of destroying a life from that hour a burthen and reproach.

"This is my short and horrible detail. I imagine you, as you shrink in disgust from what I write; and shall I ever incur the misery of *seeing* you turn loathing from that face you have so often gazed on in admiration and love? Never, Valerie, never! You must never see me more.

"But I was determined with my own hand

to absolve you of your vow—to recommend your marriage with the man who my father's letters had repeatedly, but unknown to you, told me he wished for your husband. I believe him to be worthy, and I recommend you still to become his wife. Imagine what I suffered while I held you in my arms, knelt at your feet, kissed your hand, felt your bosom once more throb so close to mine—yet dared not let you look on me—dared not give utterance to one sentence t- relieve my bursting heart, for fear of your dis covering me. Oh, God! what agony can equal that of being, after absence and suffering, within reach of the object of one's love, without the means of telling her how she is still beloved! But my cup of wretchedness is now full. The most forcible passion of my existence—my love for Valerie—the most powerful weakness of my nature—vanity in my personal beauty—are both torn from me. I can never possess *her*, and I look on myself at times in my own despite, but always with horror and disgust.

"Once even, while I held you in my arms that dreadful evening, every thing I believe would have given way to the strong influence of my affection and my agony—I was on the point of speaking in my own voice—of discovering myself—and of dying, if it must have been so, under the withering expression of your horror—when you spoke, as you thought to Isambert, and spoke of the brilliant and beautiful face which you had loved. That phrase was my final doom. I then felt how your love was connected with, was part of your admiration—how I had deceived and broken all its dreams of bliss, and I crawled from the spot, like a loathsome reptile, conscious of the loathing that would have followed your discovery.

"And now, Valerie, once more and for ever farewell! This is indeed the last time I shall address you. I escape now, under a feigned name, into the wilds from which I stole, but to take my last agonizing look of you. I shall be, when you receive this, beyond all possibility of

discovery—and every day shall see me plunging deeper into the desolation, which now alone suits the foulest blot upon his race.

"I can add no epithet to tell how much, and how solely I am *yours*,

"LUCIEN."

Valerie read through the letter—with short, wild, convulsive movements of face and form; and, when finished, it dropped from her hands, which were mechanically clasped together in strong emotion; and falling on her knees, she would have uttered a prayer to Heaven, but her voice and recollection alike failed her, and she fell back in her uncle's arms, with a loud scream of hysteric laughter.

Need the reader be told of her rapture, when recovered recollection brought Lucien's letter to her mind? Need it be said, that she was rejoiced to find *what* had caused Lucien's conduct? Must I stop, and strive to trace all the windings of the flood of passionate delight that

deluged her whole soul, to know that she was still beloved, and he still worthy of her love? Language, thank Heaven, refuses its intrusion sometimes—and readers have hearts as well as eyes, to feel what they never can see explained.

Not a day was lost—not a minute misapplied. Prompt as lightning, and steady as the sun, Valerie formed her plan and followed it up. Documents of all kinds were procured, of Lucien's identity and services—and an instant application made and acceded to, and carried into effect, for Valerie's admission into the sublime sisterhood of *Sœurs de la Charité.* Under the protection of their vows and costume, and furnished with a passport, which bore on it the object of her pursuit, "the care of the wounded stragglers of the French armies," she resolved to set out alone—to traverse the route which Lucien had taken—and find him, if—but she would not admit one doubt to check the enthusiastic inspiration which urged her on. She went *to find* him—not *to seek* him, for the latter word

implied a doubt! Such was her way of expressing her resolve—and such, will every heart of energy respond, was the way to ensure success.

The reader has seen, with me, this heroine—for was she not one?—on the very day, at the very moment she completed her vows for one year, in the very church that had witnessed that other pledge that was to endure for ever—and I saw her, such was my great good luck, part from her group of friends, and the crowd of astonished and admiring rustics, who raised their chorus of honest blessings as she walked away.

Her uncle, the younger branches of the family of the De Villefortes, and Isambert, accompanied her, in close contact, to the top of the southern hill, at the foot of which the little village of Flixecourt reposes. From its summit a distant view of pastoral plains is evident, stretching far away. There the whole party took their farewell of *The Sœur de la Charité*. Thence, on her singular and perhaps unparalleled mission, set

out *The Conscript's Bride.* Long did the whole body of observers stay lingering on the summit of this eminence, pouring prayers and blessings after the fading figure of Valerie;—but, her farewell taken, her parting over, *she* sent back no lingering glance. Her mind, and heart, and soul were all before her!

POSTSCRIPT.

It is now near thirteen years since the day I first saw Flixecourt, and listened to the recital from which, and subsequent information, the foregoing story was composed. I have many a time passed through this little village since, but generally in the rapid conveyance of the *Malle Poste*, which has no sympathy with the movements of the adventure-seeking traveller. Still, during the few minutes occupied in changing horses, I have always contrived to exchange a friendly word or too with mine host of the *Croix Blanche*, Monsieur Joly, or with the worthy owner of *Le grand Salon*, a little cabin at the upper end of the village. From these

good folk I never fail to inquire after the several persons so often mentioned in these pages. The sum of the information I have been able to snatch, up to the time of my last journey from Paris, a few months back, is this:

Valerie, after a resolute struggle through such difficulties as might be supposed to beset a young creature unaccustomed to the world she fearlessly entered into, but without meeting any of those "monsters of chimæras dire," which assail some heroines, succeeded in the object of her pilgrimage! Tracing the wanderings, which love alone could have unravelled, she at length found Lucien, in a secluded retreat in the very heart of Germany, where he had taken refuge from his own misery, with a benevolent and hospitable family. The particulars of the meeting I never could learn. But certain it is that Valerie thought (or at least persisted in writing that she did so), that never was exaggeration so absurd as was Lucien's account of his own deformity. He had been disfigured cer

tainly—but one side of his face was still beautiful; and, although both were alike dear to the pure and exquisite affection of Valerie, it appeared that she took the handsome one for the model of those miniature resemblances, which, as a fond and faithful wife, she was and is still probably in the yearly habit of presenting to him. For she writes to her friend Henriette, long since the Countess of Montmenil, that nothing can exceed the loveliness of her children, except their goodness—the usual wording, I believe, of a mother's certificate.

But although Lucien was at length convinced that he was not quite hideous in Valerie's sight, he never could consent to return to France. He scarcely expected to meet such wilful blindness to his defects in any other pair of eyes, and he would not risk any mortification to that poor vanity of his, which, after all, we may suppose he will carry to the grave with him.

Mr. Lacourtelle, to reconcile himself to the loss of his son and Valerie, for he would not give

up his country to join them as they entreated, married his faithful servant Madeleine, and will I am sure be happy to give further information as to himself and his friends, to any one who travels more leisurely than I now do, and will pay him a visit.

Isambert, soon after *his* marriage, came into his inheritance; for his father having lived to see the final fall of the imperial spoiler of his shrubbery, died soon after being secured in his titles and honours, having first sold the old château, which he could no longer endure, and leaving his son the produce, with the other remnants of his property, and such interest at court as ensured him an honourable and lucrative place in Paris, where he and Henriette are, I hope, firmly and happily established.

The De Villefortes are, I believe, just as we left them, for I know not if Camille or Victorine be married or single; but the château itself is within half a league of Flixecour, and who-

ever may think it worth while, can there learn every particular.

Old Bonnard, the notary, who cheated the devil so long, is they say caught at last. He certainly has been for several years *dead*—and the reader will make whatever addition his charity dictates.

THE END.

ERRATA.

Vol. 1. page 267. for "provence" read *province.*
Vol. 2. page 279. for "Afrancisados" read *Afrancesados.*

SHACKELL AND BAYLIS, JOHNSON'S-COURT.